

NEW



# HISTORY'S Unsolved MYSTERIES

Unsolved crimes & events that have  
baffled the world's greatest minds



DISAPPEARANCES • MURDERS • SECRET SIGNALS • ALIENS

Digital  
Edition

FUTURE  
FIFTH  
EDITION









# WELCOME

When no word was received of nine students trekking Russia's remote Ural Mountains in February 1959, alarm bells rang. A search party was sent into the snowy abyss to rescue them, but instead of grateful faces, the team stumbled across something much more bizarre and gruesome. Five bodies were found within a kilometre of their camp, undressed, burnt, and injured. Over the next few months, the corpses of the remaining four were found missing tongues, eyeballs or – most mysteriously of all – physically unharmed, but with catastrophic internal injuries. For decades the case of the Dyatlov Pass incident became the fodder of conspiracy theories, and even the official conclusion in 2020 by the Russian government of death by hypothermia in the wake of an avalanche failed to satisfy many.

Over the decades, many events and crimes – from seemingly straightforward to the utterly bizarre – have remained unsolved. In History's Unsolved Mysteries, explore some of the world's most striking unresolved cases – can you work out the truth?

History's unsolved mysteries





「 FUTURE 」



# HISTORY'S Unsolved MYSTERIES

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Cover images  
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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce - www.marketforce.co.uk  
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History's Unsolved Mysteries Fifth Edition (AHB6392)  
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company quoted on the  
London Stock Exchange  
(symbol: FUTR)  
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Part of the  
**REAL  
CRIME**  
bookazine series



The content in this book first  
appeared in Unresolved Mysteries



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**“NOT EVEN THE GREATEST OF  
MAGICIANS CAN REALLY VANISH  
INTO THIN AIR”**



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# UNEXPLAINED DEATHS



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Nicolas Cado / AFP via Getty Images



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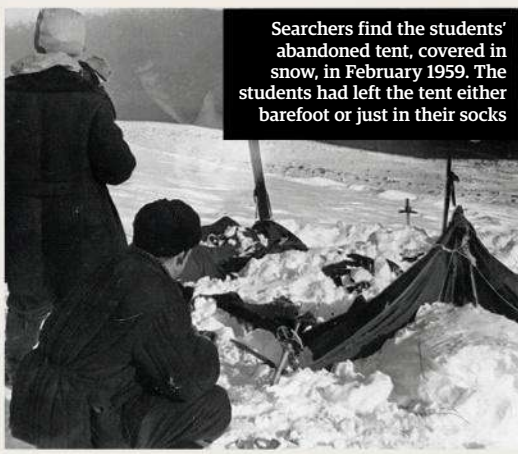
# UNSOLVED MURDERS AND MYSTERIOUS DEATHS

Around the world, people have gone missing or been found dead, their deaths becoming a mythologised mystery

WRITTEN BY NELL DARBY

CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS  
DO NOT CROSS  
CRIME





Searchers find the students' abandoned tent, covered in snow, in February 1959. The students had left the tent either barefoot or just in their socks

**M**ysterious deaths have always grabbed our attention. Even where there might be a logical reason behind a death, we want to believe that we are being lied to, or that there is another reason behind it. Such is human nature; unless we have evidence for something, we are naturally inclined to doubt what we are told, or even what we see. Over the centuries, there have been many mysterious deaths, and attendant conspiracy theories. Here are just a few of the cases that have made us stop and think, and that continue to capture public attention.



A tomb in Yekaterinburg's Mikhailov Cemetery includes photos of those who died so mysteriously 60 years ago

**“THEY WERE NOW EXPOSED TO THE ELEMENTS IN THE DEPTHS OF WINTER”**



Group leader Igor Dyatlov's smiling face leaps out from newspaper reports on the incident that continues to fascinate us decades after it occurred



# THE DYATLOV PASS MYSTERY

They were innocently hiking through the Ural Mountains – but nine young Russians never came back

They were nine experienced 'ski hikers' - using their skis to hike through snowy terrain - who set out one winter's day in 1959 to trek to the summit of a mountain in the Russian wilderness. They never came home, their disappearance becoming an enduring mystery.

The individuals were students and graduates from the Ural Polytechnic Institute, now known as the Ural State Technical University. The institute was based in Yekaterinburg in Russia, a city notorious for being where the Russian imperial family was massacred in 1918. Their base, therefore, already had a rather dark history, and Russia itself was seen to Western eyes as something of a dark and mysterious land. The Cold War had arguably started at the end of World War II, and there was a mutual suspicion between Russia and the United States. Now, coverage of Russian intrigue was exacerbated by this new mystery in the heart of the Ural Mountains.

The ski-hiking trip had been organised by 23-year-old radio engineering student Igor Dyatlov, a keen skier. The group he gathered together originally numbered ten: Igor, together with seven

other men and two women, who all wanted to go ski-hiking to the mountain of Otorten. The youngest member of the party was Lyudmila Dubinina, who was just 20 years old; the oldest was Semyon Zolotaryov, who was 38. Most of the party, though, were in their early 20s.

Their plan was to travel by train to the town of Ivdel, from where they would travel by truck to an isolated village called Vizhay. They arrived in Vizhay on 26 January, where they bought loaves of bread to eat, and stayed the night, getting their last decent sleep before starting to trek towards Otorten. Two days in, they lost one of their members, Yuri Yudin; not to any mysterious circumstance, but from health problems. He suffered from rheumatism, and found the pain he was experiencing from his knees and other joints too much to continue. He turned back, but the other nine continued. It would turn out that Yuri had had a lucky escape, and would go on to live a long life - unlike the other students.

This was all in the future, however. After Yuri had left them, the others trekked on with their skis and poles, and eventually, on 31 January, they



arrived on the edge of highlands that marked a change in conditions to uphill climbing. They went to store some food and equipment in the woods, so that they could retrieve them on their way back - thus also lightening their load during the climb - and on 1 February, they started to move through a pass. They were hoping to get through the pass before setting up camp on the opposite side, but the weather put paid to their plans. Snowstorms moved in, making it virtually impossible to see; the group got confused, travelling in the wrong direction and heading too far west. They could have moved downhill to set up camp in a sheltered area, taking some respite until the weather cleared, but Igor Dyatlov was reluctant to move downhill and then have to head back up later, and so the group, on realising they had gone the wrong way, simply stopped and established their camp on the eastern slope of Kholat Syakhl, a place whose name translates as the ominous 'Dead Mountain'. They were now exposed to the elements in the depths of a Russian winter.

Back in Yekaterinburg, nobody was aware that this is what had happened. Dyatlov had promised to send a telegram back to their sports club when the group returned safely to Vizhay - a date he estimated would be around 12 February, although he had mentioned to the poorly Yuri Yudin that the group might have to take longer. This was not unusual, and the group's friends and families would not have been too worried when no word was sent from Vizhay, as delays could occur. However, when nothing had been heard by 20 February, over a week later, relatives became concerned. A rescue group, involving students and teachers from the Ural Polytechnic Institute, set off in search of the party, but found nothing. Military forces were then sent - but still, it took until 26 February for there to be any news of the missing students.

It was not good news. The search party had found the students' campsite, which included a damaged - and abandoned - tent. Covered in snow, the tent contained all the group's known possessions, including their shoes. Leading out of the tent were eight or nine sets of footprints, indicating that the group, all shoeless, had made their way out of the tent into the snowy expanse, either barefoot or simply in their socks - something that made no sense, given the bitterly cold temperatures of around -30 degrees Celsius (-22 degrees Fahrenheit).

The tracks led 500 metres (1,640 feet) away, at which point they became snow covered. Under a Siberian pine tree were the remains of a small fire - and two bodies, clad only in underwear, barefoot. The bodies were those of Yuri Krivonishenko, and Yuri Doroshenko. Between the pine where the two men's bodies were found, and the abandoned camp, three more bodies were found, each at different distances from the tree. Two were Zinaida Kolmogorova and Rustem Slobodin; the third was the group's leader, Dyatlov.

## WHO WAS SEMYON?

**There was a further mystery with the Dyatlov Pass nine, when the identity of one of their number was investigated**

Semyon Alekseevich Zolotaryov (sometimes spelled Zolotarev) was the oldest of the ski-hikers that fateful February. Born on 2 February 1921, he was 38 at the time, and so might be assumed to have had a more varied life than the others, some of whom were young enough to be his children.

Yet his life might have been even more interesting than anyone could have ever imagined. Rumours abounded about who Semyon actually was, and reached a climax in 2014, when his remains were exhumed following several requests from journalists. His remains indicated first that his injuries were more consistent with a car crash than a natural event; and, even more shockingly, his DNA did not have any link to the DNA of known living relatives of Semyon Zolotaryov. His remains had been buried at the Ivanovskoe Cemetery in Yekaterinburg, Russia, but there were no burial records for anyone of that name there.

The only thing that could be determined positively was that a reconstruction of the face of the buried corpse had similarities to post-war photographs of Semyon. This has led to claims that the man who died in the Urals was someone who had adopted the identity of Semyon after the end of World War II for unknown reasons; truly a mystery in itself.



The dashing Semyon Zolotaryov was the oldest member of the doomed ski-hiking group, but was he who he claimed to be?

This was where the story originally ended: no more bodies were visible. Then on 4 May, more than two months after the original, horrific discoveries, the final four - Lyudmila Dubinina, Alexander Kolevatov, Nikolai Thibeaux-Brignolles and Semyon Zolotaryov were found, buried under four metres (13 feet) of snow in a ravine. It looked like they had died at separate times, and as they had died, their clothes had been taken by the survivors in an attempt to keep warm. Lyudmila was wearing Yuri Krivonishenko's ripped trousers, for example, and had wrapped her left leg in someone else's torn jacket.

What had happened that could have caused the deaths of nine young, fit and well people? These were experienced ski-hikers; men and women who were used to the cold of a Russian winter. Why had they gone out barefoot, en masse, and why were their

bodies found in different locations? Various theories abounded about their deaths. It was said that local indigenous people might have attacked the students for being on their territory, but there was no evidence either of other people being present at the time, or of any fighting. The inquests into their deaths should have settled the mystery, but instead, it seemed to increase it.

The first five students to have been found were deemed to have died from hypothermia, although it was revealed that Slobodin also had a small skull fracture. However, the bodies found in May were different. Three had substantial skull injuries (Nikolai had died from his); both Lyudmila and Semyon had serious chest fractures, yet no sign of external trauma or soft-tissue damage. Horribly, Lyudmila's eyes and tongue were missing, as were Semyon's eyes.





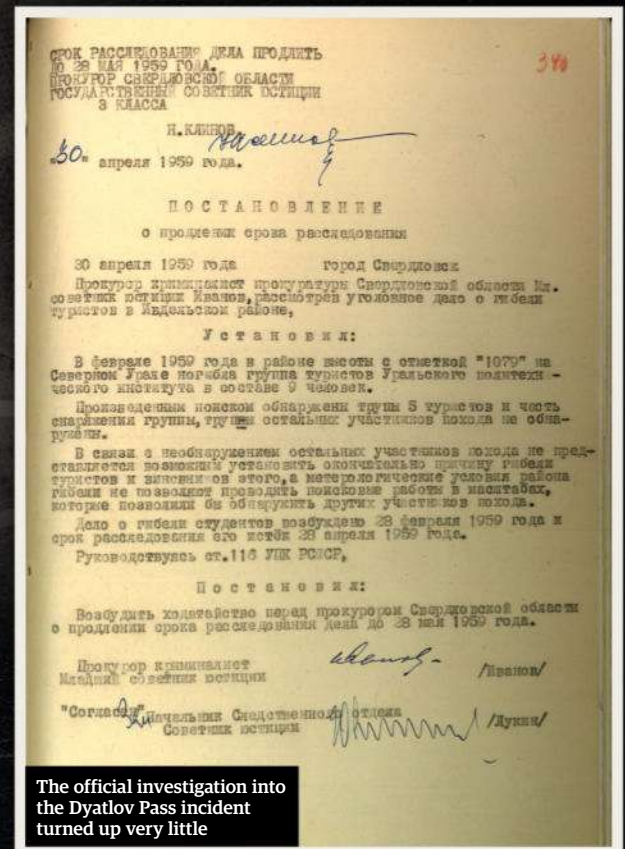
**“ALTHOUGH THEY HAD LEFT BEHIND CAMERAS AND DIARIES, THERE IS STILL SIGNIFICANT DOUBT ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED”**

The official verdict was that all nine had died due to a 'compelling natural force', but it could not be determined what that was. Theories included an avalanche, or the effects of hypothermia, when a person believes they are actually warm, and try and take off layers of clothing, thus exacerbating the situation. But there were problems with determining what had happened. Although some of the individuals had undoubtedly died of hypothermia - and Lyudmila Dubinina's missing eyes and tongue could possibly have been the result of putrefaction, her body being found face down in a stream - others had injuries that couldn't be explained. Although they had left behind cameras and diaries, there is still significant doubt about what happened. Postmortems showed that they hadn't eaten for six to eight hours before they had died, but what they did in those hours is unknown.

That element of the unknown has led to their deaths 60 years ago continuing to be seen as a mystery. Newspaper reports have continued to explore the case over the subsequent decades. In 2013, a film was made based loosely on the events. Originally titled *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* (it was later renamed *Devil's Pass*), the fact that this film played rather fast and loose with the original events, and utilised previous theories involving military or even extra-terrestrial involvement, added to the sense of unreality surrounding the original chain of events. Director Renny Harlin says he believes the Dyatlov Pass incident was the result of a government experiment going wrong; one of the theories that has long been posited is the possibility that the group came into contact with the government testing of a nuclear or military weapon. Other theories, too, remain, from a parachute mine exercise to an assault by

a Russian Yeti. It is not, then, unsurprising that in February 2019, Russian prosecutors started a new investigation into the case, in an attempt to clear up the rumours and theories around the 'bizarre' deaths. A criminal investigation had originally been opened into the case in February 1959, but when it was decided that nature was to blame, the investigation was shelved after just three months.

This remarkable new investigation presented their findings in July 2020, revealing their conclusion that the group had perished as a result of hypothermia caused by an avalanche, which forced the unprepared group to vacate their camp in poor visibility. "It was a heroic struggle. There was no panic. But they had no chance to save themselves under the circumstances," concluded the deputy head of the regional prosecutor's office, Andrey Kuryakov.





# BELLA IN THE WYCH ELM

The Hagley Wood mystery started with boys searching for birds' nests, but ended as something more ominous

It was April 1943, and World War II was being fought, affecting the daily lives of millions. Yet in Hagley Wood, near Birmingham, children were continuing to play as normal, war being something of an abstract concept for the young.

On one spring day that April, four boys were out searching for birds' nests and their eggs. In their mid-teens, this might be the last year such innocent occupations would be their focus; it certainly would be after this fateful day.

The boys spotted a fascinating tree, an old wych elm. It had a hollowed-out trunk, and was rather creepy looking. Fifteen-year-old Bob Farmer was despatched to climb the tree, but from higher up, he looked back down into the hollow trunk. A face - or what had once been a face - was looking back at him.

Bob had seen a skull, still with some hair and skin attached. He and his friends, being curious boys still, although obviously shocked, examined the skull, before replacing it. When they got home, one boy told his father, who called the police. What they then found was the body of a young woman - taffeta stuffed in her mouth - wearing a blue, striped cardigan, a skirt, and a pair of old shoes. Her body was examined, and it was determined that she was around 35 years old, a mother, and small - just five feet tall. She had also

been dead for up to two years. Nobody seemed to know who she was, and after the initial interest in her, it waned, and her identity, it appeared, would never be known. But then, after eight months, graffiti started to appear locally, each being a permutation of the question: 'Who put Bella in the wych elm?' The graffiti was all in the same hand, but in different locations. Bella was referred to as Bella, Luebella, or 'Hagley Wood Bella'.

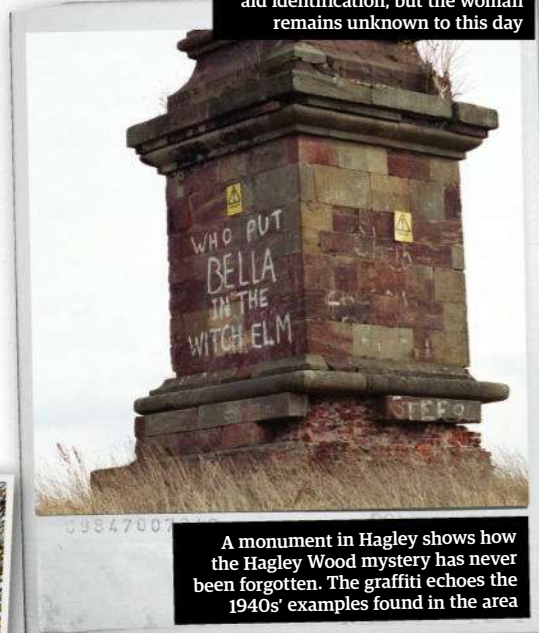
There were now two mysteries: who was the young woman found murdered in the wych elm, and who was the person leaving the graffiti? Did that person know 'Bella', or know who killed her? Or was it the murderer himself leaving incriminating messages, frustrated that the police could not get anywhere with the case?

Theories continued to be explored over the years that followed, mainly involving witchcraft, as Bella's hand had been severed. A decade after her corpse was discovered, a letter was sent to a local journalist, claiming that Bella had been killed as part of a Nazi spy ring. Then Bella's body itself went missing.

Over the past 70 years, Bella has continued to fascinate investigators and historians. In 2018, her face was re-created using craniofacial identification, but her identity remains unknown, and likely will for eternity.



A drawing of 'Bella' and the clothes she was found in was produced to aid identification, but the woman remains unknown to this day

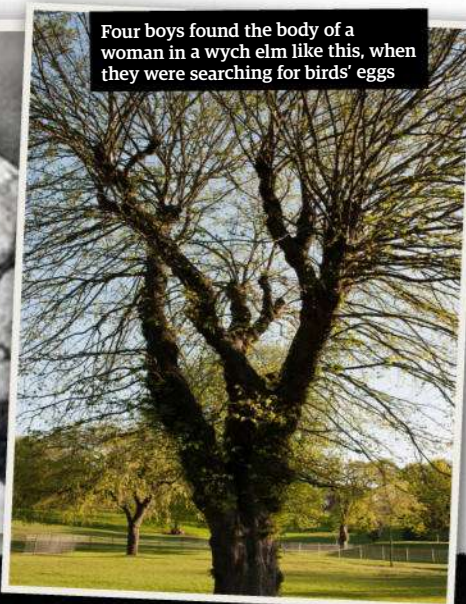


A monument in Hagley shows how the Hagley Wood mystery has never been forgotten. The graffiti echoes the 1940s' examples found in the area

The skull of Bella, the unknown woman whose body was found in a wych elm tree in the Midlands in 1943



Four boys found the body of a woman in a wych elm like this, when they were searching for birds' eggs



**"A LETTER WAS SENT TO A LOCAL JOURNALIST, CLAIMING THAT BELLA HAD BEEN KILLED AS PART OF A NAZI SPY RING"**



**SPECIAL**  
**Daily Police Bulletin**  
OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF POLICE DEPARTMENT, CITY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA  
CHIEF'S OFFICE, City Hall (Phone Michigan 5211—Connecting all Stations and Depts.) C. R. HERRALL, Chief of Police  
Vol. 40 Tuesday, January 21, 1947 No. 14

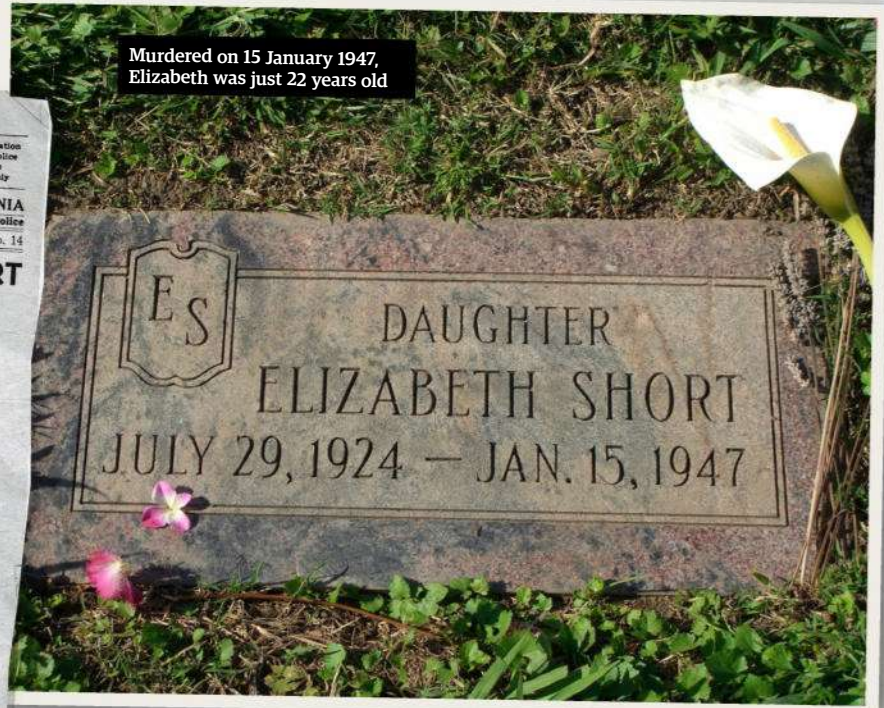
**WANTED INFORMATION ON ELIZABETH SHORT**  
Between Dates January 9 and 15, 1947



Description: Female, American, 22 years, 5 ft. 6 in., 118 lbs., black hair, green eyes, very attractive, had lower teeth, finger nails chewed to ends. On January 15, 1947 when she got out of car at Biltmore Hotel, probably Cardigan style, white fluffy blouse, black skirt, black gloves full-length beige, carried black plastic handbag, friends with both sexes and the Biltmore, and was last seen there.

**Police were keen to find out what happened to Elizabeth, but never did**

Inquiry should be made to ascertain who as Elizabeth



Murdered on 15 January 1947, Elizabeth was just 22 years old

# THE BLACK DAHLIA

Found dead and mutilated in an LA street, Elizabeth Short has been the subject of many books since...

Her face still looks out from the covers of several books today. She looks away to the side, smiling; a striking young woman with a mass of artfully curled black hair, a made-up face and a look of hopefulness. This is Elizabeth Short, an aspiring actress at 22 years old. Another image, though, also shows the same woman in a different light. This time, she stares straight at the camera, mouth open, her expression more aggressive, less innocent, posing for a mugshot after her arrest for underage drinking. Both images are of Elizabeth, and they reflect the different sides of her personality.

Although she is forever now associated with Los Angeles, Elizabeth, who became known as the 'Black Dahlia', was actually born in Boston on 29 July 1924, the third of five daughters. Her father deserted his family when she was just five. Two years older

than Marilyn Monroe, both, like so many other young women of the 1930s and 1940s, would seek to make their mark in the movie-making business. Unfortunately, Elizabeth was never to make it in life, although she became famous in death. She was quick to move from Boston, and was eager to settle in California, where her father now lived. She didn't get on with the man she hadn't seen since she was a child and soon moved on. In the summer of 1946, she moved to LA in the hope of getting an acting break. It never came.

Her body was found in a vacant lot near Leimert Park on the night of 15 January 1947. She had been cut in half, drained of blood and mutilated, but then - bizarrely - washed. A local woman found the nude body, looking more like a doll than a real woman. However, this was a woman - one whose face had been slashed, and whose intestines had been pulled out. She had been raped, but had died from blows to her head and face, her body being cut in half postmortem. A crowd of onlookers soon began to gather at the scene, including journalists, and this became symbolic of the case - a murder that attracted, and continues to attract, substantial attention. It is now said to be one of the oldest unsolved cases in LA County, and despite numerous investigations, suspects and theories, it is likely to remain so.

Elizabeth Short was an aspiring actress who hoped her move to Los Angeles would bring her success. Instead, it brought her death



# THE MYSTERIOUS MAN OF SOMERTON BEACH

While investigating the body of a man found dead on the sands of Somerton Beach, detectives would unearth secret codes, hidden phone numbers and a Russian spy ring – leaving them with more unanswered questions than viable clues

WRITTEN BY **JOANNA ELPHICK**





## THE MYSTERIOUS MAN OF SOMERTON BEACH





**T**he young couple taking an evening walk along Somerton Beach didn't think much of the man they saw lying on the sand with his head propped against the old seawall. He appeared drowsy, for he lethargically raised his right arm before dropping it into his lap limply. They assumed he was just catching the last of the sun's rays, and so they left him to relax as they made their way up the 25 wooden steps leading to the corner of The Esplanade and Bickford Terrace, in the shadow of the Crippled Children's Home. It was 7pm on 30 November 1948, and they were to be the last people to see the mysterious Somerton Man while he was still alive.

30 minutes later, another pair of walkers strolling along the beach, which was near Glenelg, just south of Adelaide in south Australia, noticed that the prostrate figure must be dead drunk, as he appeared oblivious to the gathering mosquitoes. Sadly, it wouldn't be long before the insects would also take an unhealthy interest in him, since, in that short space of time, as the sun finally dipped below the horizon, he had passed away. Further witnesses later came forward to tell detectives of a strange character gazing

down upon the corpse from the top of the steps. However, it was not until 6.30am on the morning of 1 December that John Lyons and two other gentlemen on horseback established that the sleeping figure was actually dead. The police were soon called and Detective Sergeant Lionel Leane, who was to lead the initial investigation, carefully noted down the scene before him. Leaning against the seawall with his legs fully extended towards the sea and his feet casually crossed, the man looked for all the world as if he had simply fallen asleep. A cigarette precariously balanced on the collar of his elegant double-breasted jacket, as if it had slipped from the corner of his mouth, just as if he had dozed off. Having taken photographs of the body in situ, Leane decided to carry out a thorough search of the gentleman's possessions. A number of items were noted down and bagged up for evidence, including a packet of cigarettes, a comb, chewing gum and an unused train ticket.

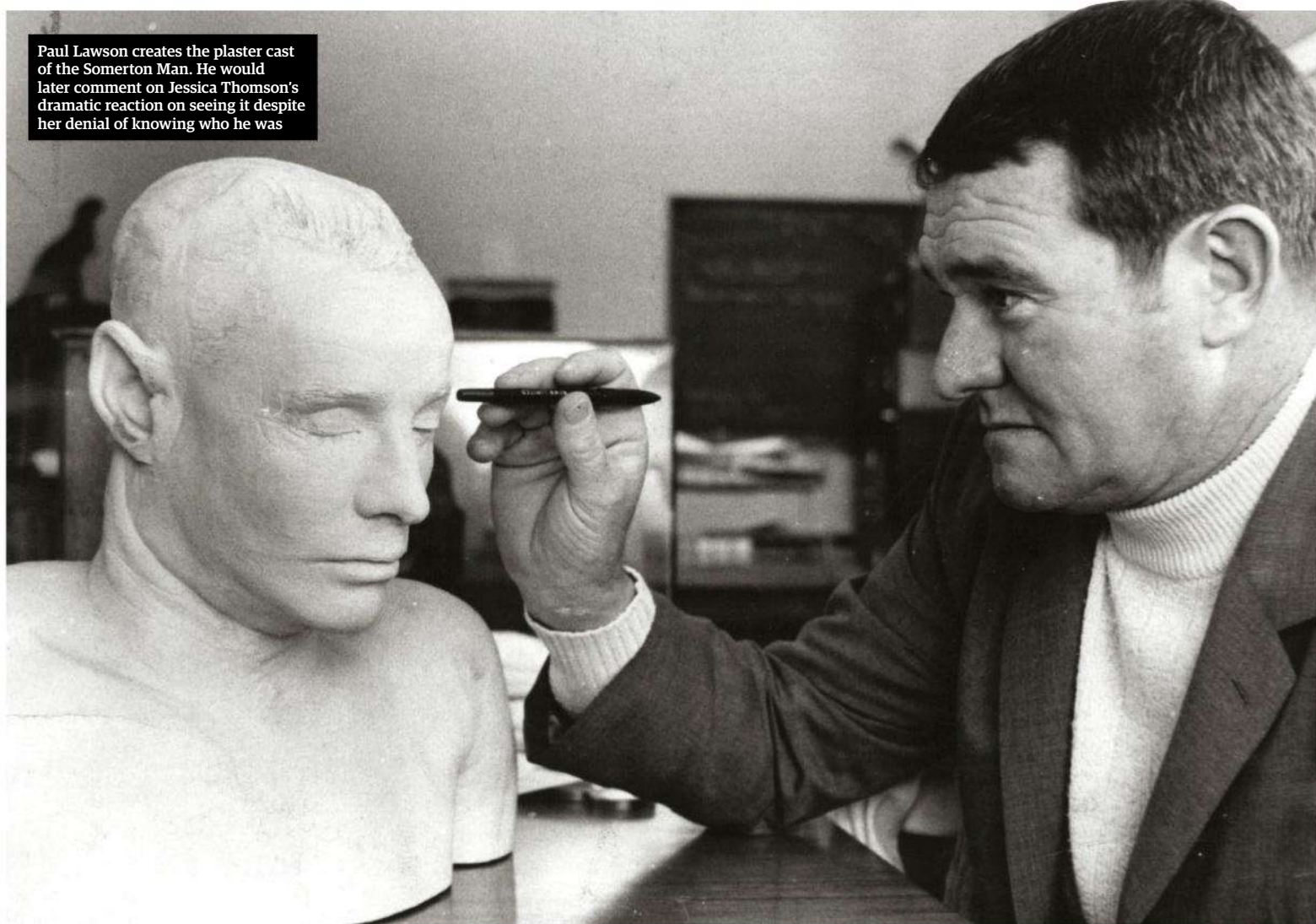
### SUICIDE OR MURDER?

Having gathered all the evidence available from an initial search, the detective had the body sent to John Burton Cleland, a leading pathologist of the time. At 1.5 metres tall with broad shoulders

**"IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT SOMETHING TRULY DREADFUL HAD HAPPENED TO THE MYSTERY MAN FROM THE BEACH"**

and a small, slim waist, the man appeared to have been in good physical shape. However, the autopsy was to prove otherwise. Upon opening up the body, it soon became clear that something truly dreadful had happened to the mystery man from the beach. Blood had mixed in with his last meal within the stomach, which was, along with the pharynx, duodenum, kidneys and spleen, heavily congested. The gullet had ulcerated and there were obvious signs of an acute gastric haemorrhage. This was clearly not a natural death. But could it have been a suicide? Cleland thought not. The unknown man had been poisoned, probably with a soluble hypnotic or barbiturate,

Paul Lawson creates the plaster cast of the Somerton Man. He would later comment on Jessica Thomson's dramatic reaction on seeing it despite her denial of knowing who he was







## WITNESS THE WATCHING MAN

During the initial investigation, one witness came forward stating that he had observed a shadowy figure looking down upon the body from above on the corner of The Esplanade and Bickford Terrace. The character was never traced.

## SCENE OF CRIME OR TRAGIC ACCIDENT?

A number of clues were discovered at the scene that, although intriguing, ultimately carried the investigation no further forward



## CLUE THE UNLIT CIGARETTE

A cigarette was found carefully balanced on the right collar of the unknown man's coat. Since it had not been lit, it was unlikely to have dropped out of his mouth while he was sleeping. Had it been placed there on purpose by the killer?



## VICTIM THE SOMERTON MAN

The body was discovered leaning against the seawall. Had he committed suicide, been poisoned or died of positional asphyxia while dozing on the beach? Nobody knew.



## CLUE STRIPED TIE

The stripes on the tie worn by the unknown man sloped with a negative gradient, as seen in fashion in the United States at the time. People in both Australia and the UK traditionally wear their stripes in the 'heart to sword' position, thereby supporting the American connection.



## CLUE THE 'TAMAM SHUD' NOTE

Journalist Frank Kennedy recognised from where the phrase had originated and called the police with details of the Persian book of collected poems. The unusual font helped pinpoint the exact edition they were hunting for.

Tamam Shud



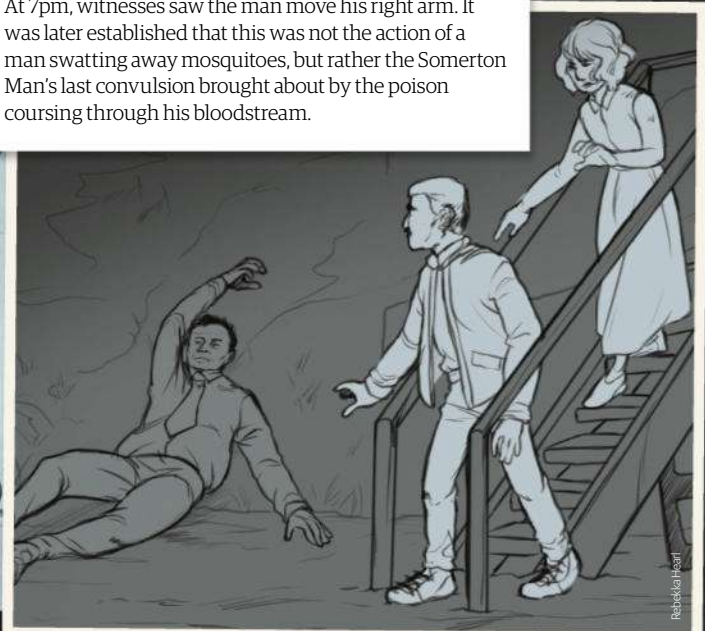
## EVENT SOMERTON MAN MOVES

At 7pm, witnesses saw the man move his right arm. It was later established that this was not the action of a man swatting away mosquitoes, but rather the Somerton Man's last convulsion brought about by the poison coursing through his bloodstream.



## CLUE PERSONAL EFFECTS

A half empty packet of Wrigley's Juicy Fruit Chewing Gum held yet another American connection, since this was a popular brand in the USA and was not sold in Australia at that time. Similarly, an aluminium comb found on him was American in design. The 10.50am unused train ticket to Henley Beach must have been bought between 6.15am and 2pm on 30 November. Only three such tickets were issued that day. A bus ticket was also discovered, which departed at 11.15am from opposite the railway station. Someone had replaced the Army Club cigarettes with a more expensive brand, Kensitas. Was this his choice or the work of the killer?



Rebecca Heart

Rebecca Heart

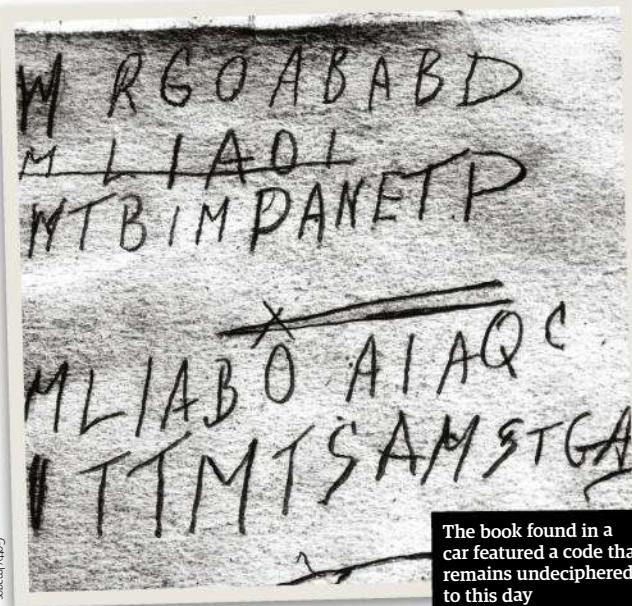


## JUST A COINCIDENCE?

Three years before the discovery of the Somerton Man, 34-year-old George Marshall from Singapore was found dead just across from Clifton Gardens in Ashton Park. He was discovered lying on his back as if fast asleep. Stranger still, a copy of the *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám* had been left open and carefully balanced on his chest. George, the brother of Singapore's first chief minister, David Marshall, was thought to have committed suicide by ingesting poison. On 15 August 1945, the authorities carried out an inquest into his death. Under two weeks later, on 28 August, a woman by the name of Gwenneth Dorothy Graham, who had given testimony at the hearing, was found floating face downwards in her bath water. Her wrists had been slit.

## THE ENCRYPTED MESSAGE

The five lines of text discovered on the last page of the *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám* have never been deciphered and therefore remain a tantalising mystery to conspiracy theorists around the world. Initially thought to be a foreign phrase, cryptographers now believe the encrypted message is of English origin. In 2004, a retired detective suggested that the last line stood for 'It's Time To Move To South Australia Moseley Street', which would link the message to Jessica Thomson's address. Computational linguists agree that it is probably English and more likely to be shorthand than code. Further specialists have claimed that micro writing can be seen using a UV backlight and an Olympus camera set to macro with optical magnification. Images of this were released on the internet in March 2017.



The book found in a car featured a code that remains undeciphered to this day

which would have caused the victim to vomit excessively after ingestion. As there was no vomit present at the scene, the detective theorised that the man had been moved post-poisoning, therefore ruling out suicide. The couple on the beach had unwittingly witnessed his final death throes.

The questions were many, the evidence limited. Cleland estimated the time of death at 2am. The man's hands and fingernails suggested he had not been a casual labourer while his calf muscles indicated he had been a long-distance runner or possibly a dancer. His toes were unusually shaped, as if he had forced them into pointed shoes or ballet slippers, but Cleland thought it was more likely that he had suffered from dystonia of the toes.

The fact that he carried no identification or wallet upon him indicated suicide, but when the clothes were examined, it was discovered that the labels had been carefully removed. This was highly suspicious, and not in keeping with a suicide theory. With the lack of vomit and removal of identifying marks, all notions of suicide were abandoned. This man, whoever he was, had most likely been murdered and carefully placed on Somerton Beach sands.

### MORE EVIDENCE, MORE QUESTIONS

Less than a month later, a brown suitcase was discovered by staff at the Adelaide railway station. Although all labels had been removed from it, it was quickly established that the case had been checked into the cloakroom on 30 November and had almost certainly belonged to the unknown man found on the beach. Detective Lionel Leane and his colleagues, Dave Bartlett and Len Brown, opened the suitcase to discover

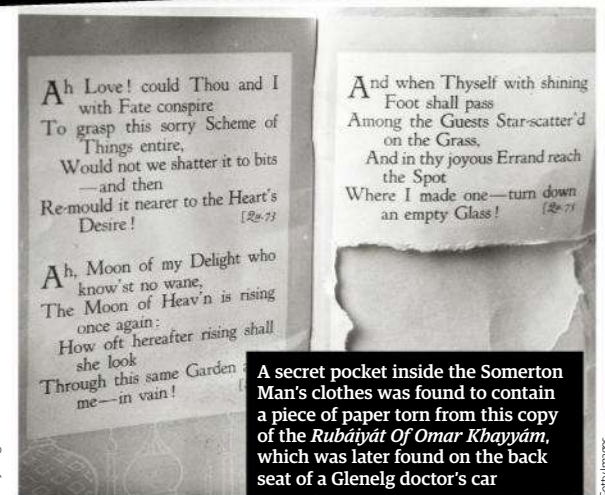




Salvation Army Captain Em Webb conducted the Somerton Man's funeral service, which was paid for by the South Australian Grandstand Bookmakers Association. Reporters and police officers look on



When she was shown the plaster cast of the Somerton Man's face, Jessica Thomson looked as if she was about to faint, despite her claim she did not know who he was



A secret pocket inside the Somerton Man's clothes was found to contain a piece of paper torn from this copy of the *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám*, which was later found on the back seat of a Glenelg doctor's car

pyjamas, a dressing gown and slippers along with an electrician's screwdriver, a pair of sharpened scissors, a sharpened table knife, a stencilling brush and a zinc square used to protect the knife.

On removing a pair of trousers from the case, a scattering of sand fell out of the cuffs. A card, neatly wrapped with orange-waxed thread, was discovered that clearly linked the case to the dead body, as exactly the same thread had been used to mend the trousers worn by the victim. Once again, the majority of labels had been removed with the exception of a couple that displayed the name 'T. Keane', 'Kean' and 'Keane'. A coat revealed a link to the United States, as this was the only country that was manufacturing such featherstitching at the time, and the style matched those worn in the country. A set of paper and pencils had been packed in the suitcase but no correspondence was discovered, which would have been an extremely useful find.

## “WHEN IT FINALLY CAME TO DETERMINING THE CAUSE OF DEATH, NO ONE COULD BE ABSOLUTELY POSITIVE”

Equally strange was the fact that there were no spare pairs of socks found with the underpants and pyjamas. The detectives were baffled and frustrated. More clues had been discovered but they seemed to lead them round and round in circles. Having chased up every conceivable lead, they appeared to be no further forward. On 17 June, Cleland conducted a thorough coroner's inquest. Most of his conclusions were speculation. The cleanliness of the victim's shoes strongly suggested he had died elsewhere and been carried to the spot where his body was discovered. This idea was in keeping with the lack of vomit where the body had been discovered. Further analysis of the stomach contents led

professor of pharmacology Cedric Stanton Hick to believe that the man had ingested a cardiac glycoside such as digitalis or ouabain, a highly toxic substance. However, when it finally came to determining the cause of death, no one could be absolutely positive. The Australian police contacted the USA's FBI asking for help in identifying their corpse but, having consulted FBI chief J Edgar Hoover, the agency was not able to find a fingerprint match for the man. A plaster cast of the unknown man's head and chest had also been taken before his burial on 14 June 1949 at the West Terrace Cemetery in Adelaide. However, one further clue would yield itself at the inquest, and it was to baffle the entire world.



# SOMERTON BEACH

The discovery of a secret code instigated a whirlwind of conspiracy theories

During the detailed examination of the dead man's clothing, a small scrap of paper was discovered rolled up in the fob pocket of his trousers. The words "Tamam Shud" were printed on it in an unusual font. The evidence was photographed and released to the press, and the mysterious clue was printed nationwide in all the papers. The words, meaning "finished" or "it is ended" in Persian, were soon identified as the last page of Edward Fitzgerald's *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám*, a collection of poems translated from Persian. It wouldn't be long before the exact copy from which the scrap had been torn was located.

Where the book had been found seems to have been lost over the years. The timing of its discovery is also a mystery but the general consensus seems to be that a member of the public found it on the back seat of an unlocked car in Jetty Road, Glenelg, not far from where the Somerton Man's body had been discovered. The scrap of paper was interesting and once again raised the idea that the unknown man had committed suicide, but it was the book itself that sparked the imagination of the public and instigated the authorities to call it an "unparalleled mystery". Within its pages, the book contained a secret code.

Five lines of code, all written in capital letters, were found in the back of the book. The second line had been scored through suggesting a mistake on the part of the writer, but this has never been confirmed. Was this a foreign language, an encrypted message or merely the ramblings of a madman? Nobody knew for sure. Specialists were brought in to decipher its meaning but, to this date, no satisfactory explanation has been given.

Along with the infuriatingly mysterious code, detectives found a telephone number, and this proved to be more useful. Although the number, X3239, was unlisted, it was quickly traced back to a local resident by the name Jessica Ellen Thomson. Jessica, also known as Jo, was a nurse who lived at 90A Glenelg Street, no more than 400 metres away from Somerton Beach where the body had been discovered. A strange coincidence? The detectives doubted it.

Jessica Thomson flatly denied any knowledge of the unknown man. She didn't know who he was or why he might have her phone number written in the back of his book. She was fearful of any publicity and insisted that all records of her name be removed from the case. From this point on a variety of pseudonyms were used including the pet name 'Jestyn', which had been used by her former nursing co-workers.

Detective Leane was not convinced that Jestyn was being entirely truthful regarding her lack of knowledge of the body's identity. Once again, he pushed for information and this time he showed her the plaster cast of the man's face made before the inquest. Her reaction was quite extraordinary. Paul Lawson, the creator of the cast, noted that, having seen it, Jestyn looked away and refused to so much as glance at it again. Leane, on the other hand, noticed her sudden change in pallor. He later stated that she was so taken aback that he believed she was about to faint. However, she stuck to her original story and reiterated that she had never set eyes on the man before.

She did confirm that during World War II she had owned a copy of the *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám*, but told the investigators she had given it to a boyfriend, Alf Boxall. After the war, Alf had contacted her but she was already engaged to Prosper Thomson and did not want to renew their friendship. She had not heard from him since. Could this be the man on the beach? The police were convinced that this was the break they had been waiting for.

In July of 1949, Alf Boxall was located, working in a bus depot in Sydney. Although taken aback by the police interest, he was happy to show them

his copy of the book, which had been signed 'Jestyn' by his then-girlfriend. He could think of no connection to the unknown man of Somerton and the police were at a loss once again. This time, no new evidence dramatically appeared to set them off again and, as a result, the case went cold.

The body of the Somerton Man was finally released and buried in Adelaide in a pitiful multiple burial site. However, somebody cared, for years later flowers started appearing on the grave. To this day it is unknown who the mourner was.

A variety of suggestions were raised about the man's identity, including that he was a Swedish station worker, a seaman named Tommy Reade and, later, a worker on a steamship. At least three people came forward saying the body belonged to Robert Walsh, a 63-year-old woodcutter, but witnesses retracted their statements when they discovered that the body lacked certain identifying scars.

In 2009, Professor Derek Abbott from the University of Adelaide decided to take up the challenge of cracking the Somerton Man mystery once and for all. The investigation covered further examination of the bizarre code, re-analysis of the poison and another look at the evasive Jestyn.

**"FIVE LINES OF CODE, ALL WRITTEN IN CAPITAL LETTERS, WERE FOUND IN THE BACK OF THE BOOK"**



When a copy of the *Rubáiyát Of Omar Khayyám* was found in a member of the public's car, it raised more questions than it answered



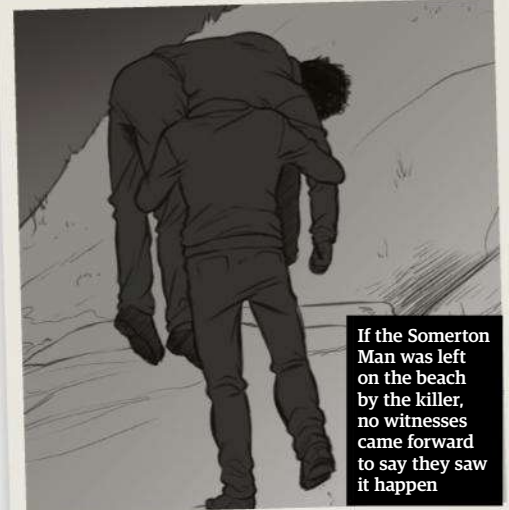
Sadly, Jessica Thomson had passed away in 2007, but her family proved to be far more loquacious.

In May 2009, Abbott called in dental experts to analyse images of the Somerton Man's teeth. They concluded that the unknown man had suffered from an extremely rare genetic disorder known as hypodontia. Less than two per cent of the population are afflicted with this condition, which leaves the mouth without incisors. The canine teeth grow directly next to the two front teeth, making this a highly unusual yet easily identifiable disorder.

Meanwhile, Henneberg had identified another unusual trait. The Somerton Man had a rare ear formation that meant that his upper ear hollow, or cyma, was larger than his cavum, or lower ear hollow. This anatomical feature occurs in only one or two per cent of the population.

Back in 1946, Jessica Thomson had given birth to a baby boy, whom she named Robin. The child was healthy with good musculature, particularly in his legs, which would ultimately help him in

his career as a dancer with the Australian Ballet. He also had two distinctive facial features: no incisors and strangely shaped ears whereby his cyma was larger than his cavum. The chances of Robin having the same ear formation and hypodontia as the Somerton Man were one in 10 million and one in 20 million respectively. Robin passed away in 2009 but was survived by his ex-wife, Roma Egan, and his daughter, Rachel. Abbott sent a photograph of the Somerton Man to Roma and asked if she knew of anyone who resembled the image. Roma did not hesitate - the Somerton Man looked spookily like her late ex-husband Robin. Could Robin Thomson have been the love child of Jessica Thomson and the Somerton Man but passed off as the son of Prosper Thomson? It was an extremely strong possibility. DNA testing would of course prove it one way or the other, but in 2011, Attorney General John Rau refused permission to exhume the body of the Somerton Man, as it was not deemed to be in the public's interest.



Rebekka Heist



Alamy

## THE AFTERMATH

So who was the Somerton Man? The mystery rages on...

By 1949, eight so-called 'positive' identifications had taken place but all turned out to be incorrect. This had increased to 251 by 1953.

More recently, in November 2013, Jessica's daughter, Kate Thomson, agreed to give an interview on *60 Minutes*, an American current affairs program. Kate confirmed that her mother was indeed 'Jestyn', but she had not been truthful to the detectives all those years ago. She claimed that her mother had admitted to her that she had known the Somerton Man all along and, even more shockingly, she had not been the only one to know his true identity. Apparently, her mother believed that "a higher level than the police force" was already aware of his name and business. This in itself was dramatic stuff but did Kate have any idea what 'his business' might have been? Kate was quite sure she did.

Kate fervently believed that both the Somerton Man and her own mother were spies working for the Russians. Although this was only speculation, she had some highly interesting circumstantial evidence to back up her surprising claim. Having given up nursing, Jessica had started teaching English to incoming migrants. Kate stated that her mother spoke fluent Russian but never explained from where or why she had learned to do so. She also had a deep interest in the concept of communism, much to the horror of her husband, Prosper.

The rare form of poison used to dispose of the Somerton Man, the strange undecipherable code, the refusal of Jestyn to acknowledge their

relationship plus the total lack of identifying possessions all led to the tantalising thought of a spy ring. Interestingly, former South Australian Chief Superintendent Len Brown believed that the man had originally hailed from a country in the Warsaw Pact. He had come to this conclusion during the 1940s due to the fact that police could do nothing to establish an identity, and the Cold War was under way.

Derek Abbott, on the other hand, is less inclined to follow the spy ring theory. As he himself stated, "You don't have to be a spy to be secretive." His conclusion is far more grounded, believing that the man was probably no more than a wheeler dealer involved in the black market and, having attempted to reconnect with his lost love, he had gone for a snooze on the beach where he unfortunately died of positional asphyxia - a great deal less exciting but possible nonetheless.

However, just when everybody thought that the most likely truth was disappointingly dull, a shiny new piece of speculation reared its head and began a fascinating addition to Australia's unparalleled mystery. In February 2017, an online identity by the name of 'Gordon332' posted the latest suggested name of the Somerton Man.

During August 1948, Major Pavel Ivanovich Fedosimov of the KGB was seen boarding a ship bound for Russia. He was never seen again. Known photographs of Fedosimov strongly suggest he had the same unusual ear formation. To this day, Gordon332 continues to post about his theory online at [tamamshud.blogspot.com](http://tamamshud.blogspot.com).

## ALTERNATIVE THEORIES

At one point, the body was named as EC Johnson of Payneham but this was somewhat undermined when the real Mr Johnson turned up at the police station. During late November 1959, an inmate of New Zealand's Wanganui Prison by the name of EB Collins claimed to know the Somerton Man's true identity. At some point his statement was mysteriously misplaced. Years later, a woman came forward with an identification card of a man named HC Reynolds. She thought that the photograph looked similar to that of the Somerton Man. The card, given to a foreign seaman during World War I, was passed on to anthropologist Maciej Henneberg. Although the faces were alike, it was the fact that both men had a mole on their cheek that convinced Henneberg to positively identify him as the Somerton Man.



# MURDER BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

When Estelle Chapon noticed that her neighbours' shutters hadn't opened for over a week, she called the police. Her actions instigated one of France's most intriguing investigations to date

WRITTEN BY JOANNA ELPHICK

CRIME SCENE

ENTER  
ENTER

GALY IMAGES

Benoît Dupont de Lignonès  
29 May 1997 - 3/4 April 2011

Anne Dupont de Lignonès  
2 August 1994 - 3/4 April 2011

Thomas Dupont de Lignonès  
28 August 1992 - 5 April 2011

Arthur Nicolas Dupont de Lignonès  
7 July 1990 - 3/4 April 2011

Agnès Dupont de Lignonès  
9 November 1962 - 3/4 April 2011

NICOLAS CADO/AFP via Getty Images



**T**o the outside world, the Dupont de Ligonès seemed the very epitome of an upper-middle class French family, with a loving, religious wife and a charming, supportive husband who doted on their four beautiful children. Sadly, the tableau was nothing more than a paper-thin façade that masked a very different life and as the investigators moved in, the notion of this happy family began to unravel.

Xavier Dupont de Ligonès came from an aristocratic family and, on the death of his father, Bernard-Hubert Dupont de Ligonès, on the 20 January 2011, Xavier inherited the title of Count. He was a handsome, charismatic and intelligent man, but, although he gained a degree from the École Nationale Supérieure de Mécanique et d'Aérotechnique in engineering, his success as an entrepreneur and businessman had resulted in a variety of short-lived successes. His professional life was to become heavily embroiled in the inquiry but, no matter how thoroughly the police scrutinised his activities, details of his assorted failing businesses were few and far between, ultimately adding to the mystery that was to unfold. Meanwhile, he presented himself as a productive member of society and a flourishing businessman.

His wife, 48-year-old Agnès, taught catechism at their local Catholic school and, although quiet, gave the impression of a contented woman to her neighbours. On marrying Xavier, she brought with her a son, Arthur, from a previous relationship. Just like the three children born to the couple within wedlock, Arthur was a bright, academic infant. At the time of his death, the 20-year-old had been awarded a baccalauréat in science and was on his way to achieving a technical diploma in IT. Thomas, who was born two years after Arthur, was the quiet member of the family, studying music at the Catholic University where he lived in the hall of residence. Anne, their only daughter, followed two years later and was generally thought to be the most academic of the children. Having inherited her mother's good looks, she subsidised her allowance by modelling clothes in a mail-order catalogue



Hundreds of people take to the streets of Nantes in memory of Agnès and her four beloved children

## “THE FAMILY’S DEBTS CONTINUED TO MOUNT UP AND THE MARRIAGE RAPIDLY SOURED”

but never let her part-time career get in the way of her studies. Finally, in 1997, the youngest son, Benoît, was born. Blessed with his father's charm and handsome features, the 13-year-old was extremely popular at school, but sensitive enough to act as an altar server at his mother's church. Friends and neighbours believed them to be a beautiful and close family, boisterous, loud, lively and, most importantly, happy. But appearances can be deceiving.

Although friends believed the Dupont de Ligonès family to be contented in Nantes, France, this was not the case and in 2000 they had attempted to emigrate to Florida, USA. The

procedure was extremely costly, ultimately ending in failure, and sadly, this expensive setback was merely the first of a series of crushing disappointments. As each business venture nose-dived, the money decreased until eventually the family were living off Agnès' inheritance. By the time of the massacre in 2011, even this money was dwindling and Xavier was facing financial ruin and desperate humiliation. He was a financial disaster and an unsuccessful businessman.

When Xavier's father passed away it was hoped that an inheritance would give them the cash boost they so desperately needed. Unfortunately, Bernard had been as financially inept as his son and no money was forthcoming. His parting gift consisted of little more than a few pieces of furniture and a .22 rifle. Almost immediately, Xavier became obsessed with the gun, joining a shooting range club and obtaining a gun licence, shocking his family since he had shown little interest in guns before. The debts continued to mount up and the marriage rapidly soured but the outward veneer of the perfect family remained intact.

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

### THE .22 RIFLE 2 FEBRUARY 2011

Xavier obtains a firearms licence having inherited a gun from his father. He proceeds to join a shooting range. He also purchases a silencer.

### THE SHOPPING SPREE 23 MARCH 2011

Xavier travels 320km from home in order to purchase bin liners, cement, cleaning products and a spade.

### ARTHUR DISAPPEARS 1 APRIL 2011

Arthur fails to turn up to the restaurant where he works to pick up his wages.

### OMINOUS PURCHASES 2 APRIL 2011

Xavier visits four different shops, buying quicklime from each one until he has amassed 40kg.





Crime scene officers prepare to remove the bodies from the garden

However, shortly before the family's disappearance, a series of bizarre and highly suspicious events took place. Xavier began asking questions online about the .22 rifle. "What type of silencer would it take? Where could he purchase one?" Having bought a silencer in March, he went on to purchase a number of portentous items including large bin liners, four bags of chalk lime, a trolley and a spade. He also bought some industrial-strength cleaning products and a fresh box of rifle bullets.

By 1 April, the family began to disappear. Arthur, Agnès' oldest son, was due to pick up his pay-check at the restaurant where he waited tables, but he never arrived. Two days later, Xavier took his wife and three biological children, Thomas, Anne and Benoît, to the cinema. After the film, the group went out for a meal where they were seen laughing and joking, the epitome of a close and loving family. That night, Anne and Benoît would vanish, never to be seen alive again.

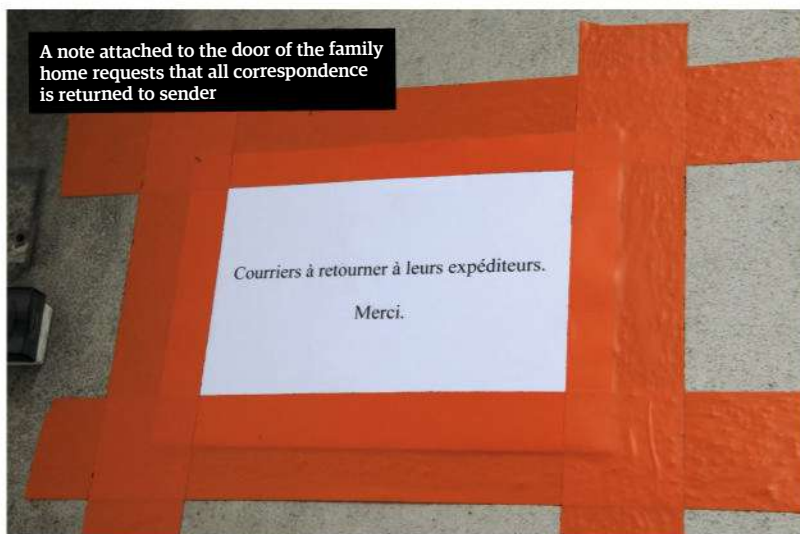
The following day, Xavier rang La Perverie-Sacré-Cœur, the school that Anne and Benoît attended, claiming that his youngest children would not be coming in as they were both

unwell. Throughout these strange occurrences, Xavier remained his usual charming, unflappable self. Having called his sister Christine for a chat, he made a table reservation for 9pm at an expensive restaurant and then proceeded to invite Thomas out to dinner. Staff at La Croix Cadeau noticed that the pair were uncharacteristically subdued and that Thomas had complained of feeling sick before making his way back to his halls of residence at university. He was seen one last time on 5 April, when he spent the afternoon with his best friend. Having crashed in front of the television, Thomas received a devastating phone call from his father who explained that he had to come home immediately. Apparently his mother had been in a tragic road accident and was currently in a coma. The boy said his goodbyes and, just like his brothers and sister, appeared to vanish off the face of the earth.

Although some neighbours claimed to have seen Agnès later than Tuesday 5 April, it would seem that most of their family and friends lost all communication at this point. Even the family dogs, an unruly pair of Labradors, stopped barking and, while their immediate neighbours initially appreciated the quiet respite, it soon seemed an ill-omened silence.



Police officers and fire fighters prepare to search for Xavier Dupont de Ligonès in the mountains of Roquebrune-sur-Argens



A note attached to the door of the family home requests that all correspondence is returned to sender

## THE LAST SUPPER 3 APRIL 2011

Xavier takes Agnès, Thomas, Anne and Benoît to a restaurant. The youngest siblings are most likely murdered either tonight or the following night.

## SCHOOL ABSENTEES 4 APRIL 2011

Anne and Benoît fail to turn up at school and do not reply to their friends' emails. Xavier eats out with Thomas but the boy seems depressed and unwell.

## LAST SIGHTING OF THOMAS 5 APRIL 2011

Thomas spends last day with friends before receiving a mysterious message from his father to come home immediately. He is most likely murdered tonight.

## WORRIED FRIENDS 6 APRIL 2011

Friends receive uncharacteristic texts from Thomas. Arthur's girlfriend sees a light on in the family home but no one answers the door. The dogs no longer bark.



## HUNT FOR A KILLER

### 1 11 APRIL 2011 BLAGNAC, NEAR TOULOUSE

Police traced Xavier to the Hôtel Première Classe where he stayed for one night before paying for the room with his credit card. He was spotted the following day, leaving in his car.

### 2 12 APRIL 2011 LE PONTET IN VAUCLUSE

Here, Xavier used his credit card to pay €214.59 for a room at the Auberge de Cassagne, where he stayed for one night, but registered under the false name of Mr Laurent Xavier.

### 3 13 APRIL 2011 LA SEYNE-SUR-MER IN VAR

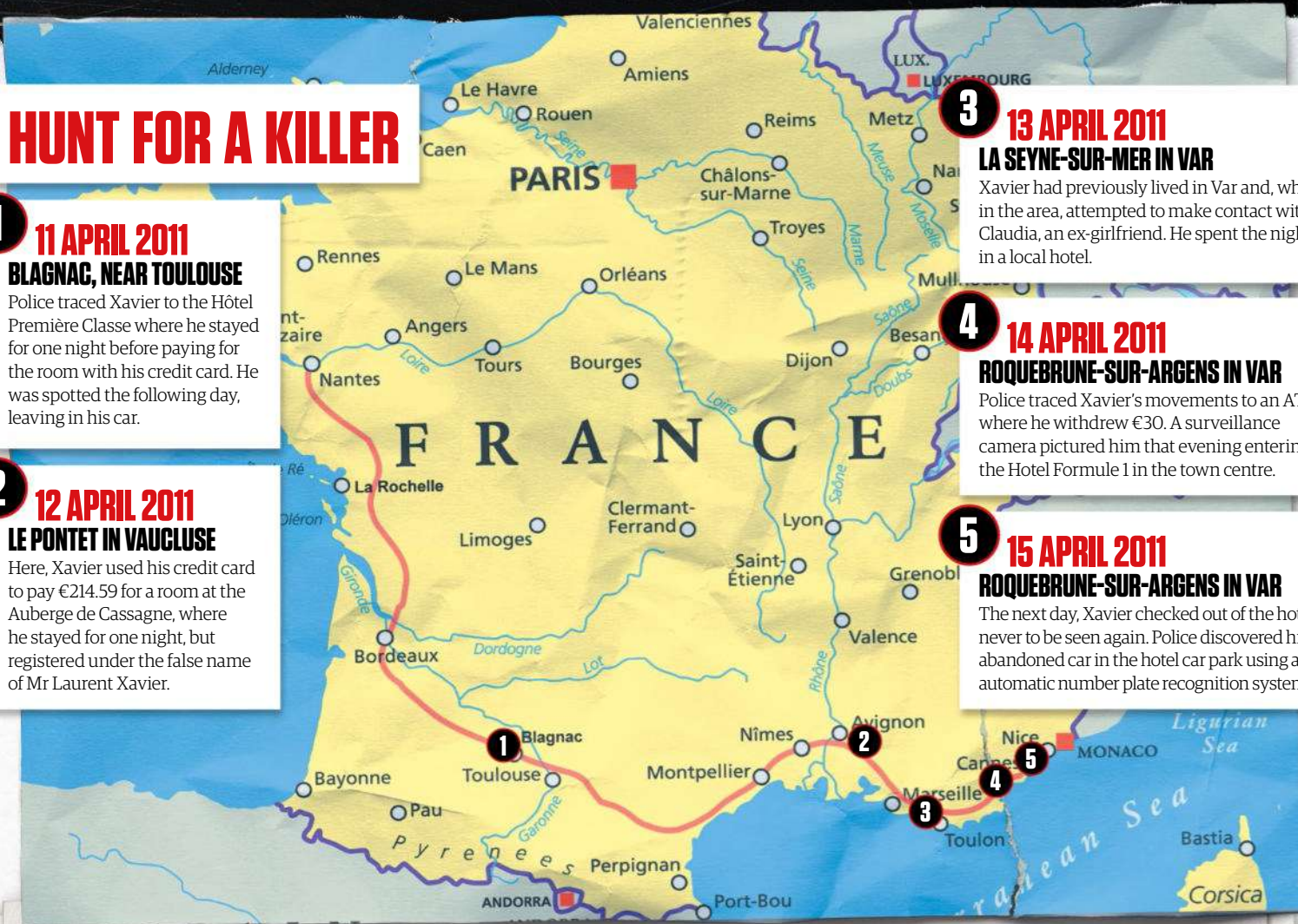
Xavier had previously lived in Var and, while in the area, attempted to make contact with Claudia, an ex-girlfriend. He spent the night in a local hotel.

### 4 14 APRIL 2011 ROQUEBRUNE-SUR-ARGENS IN VAR

Police traced Xavier's movements to an ATM where he withdrew €30. A surveillance camera pictured him that evening entering the Hotel Formule 1 in the town centre.

### 5 15 APRIL 2011 ROQUEBRUNE-SUR-ARGENS IN VAR

The next day, Xavier checked out of the hotel, never to be seen again. Police discovered his abandoned car in the hotel car park using an automatic number plate recognition system.



## FAMILICIDE: THE ULTIMATE FAMILY BETRAYAL

Although relatively rare, the act of familicide, or family annihilation, is in fact, the most common form of mass killings and occurs when a family group is wiped out by a particular member of that family

The crime can be separated into four distinct groups. The anomic killer views his family as nothing more than a status symbol. If the killer's financial circumstances alter for the worse, the family will be seen as an unwanted drain on resources and will be eliminated. The self-righteous killer punishes a particular member

of the family, usually the mother, for some perceived wrong by murdering her children before killing her. The paranoid killer believes that murdering the family is a kindness and is in fact protecting them against a far worse fate than death. Finally, the disappointed killer rages against the entire family for failing to live up

to the killer's dream of the perfect family. When John List murdered five members of his family in 1971, he claimed that financial problems and the fact that his family were no longer living a religious life were the reasons for his actions.



John List believed that killing his family was the only way to ensure their souls would reach heaven

### ANOTHER SIGHTING? 7 APRIL 2011

Neighbours claim to have seen Agnès, disputing the official date of death. Xavier is seen loading his car with large, heavy bags.

### A LAST GOODBYE 8 APRIL 2011

Xavier sends his love to his brother-in-law, mother and sister.

### THE MYSTERIOUS LETTER 11 APRIL 2011

The school is told that the children will be moving to Australia. Agnès' boss receives a resignation letter. Relatives receive the infamous 'DEA letter'. Xavier leaves the family home.

### MR LAURENT XAVIER 12 APRIL 2011

Xavier travels across southeast France and starts using a false name.



It wasn't long before friends started to worry. Text messages to classmates, supposedly from Thomas, sounded vague, the last reading "I'm out of battery, my dad's looking for a new charger for me". Meanwhile, friends of Anne and Benoît received no replies to their text messages and emails. Arthur's girlfriend became so distressed that she decided to take a trip out to the family home only to be left standing on the doorstep. Despite a light glowing from a first floor window, nobody answered the door and she was forced to walk away.

If this wasn't ominous enough, Xavier then went on to engage in some alarming correspondence with his family's friends and work colleagues. The children's school received a

## "DURING A THOROUGH SEARCH OF THE BACK GARDEN ON 21 APRIL, TWO GRAVES WERE DISCOVERED UNDER THE TERRACE PATIO IN A DARK, CRAMPED CRAWL SPACE"

final payment settlement and an accompanying letter explained that the family were relocating to Australia. The same story was used in a resignation letter, supposedly from Agnès, sent to the Catholic School where she worked. All loose ends were being tied. However, the strangest correspondence was yet to come, in the form of an unsigned, long-winded, four-page letter sent to Xavier's immediate family. In it he attempted to explain his family's sudden departure. The move to Australia was, in fact, a ruse and they were actually on their way to America but this information was not to be shared with anyone. To the absolute disbelief of his relatives, Xavier explained that he had not been a failed

businessman. This was a cover story to hide the fact that he had been working for the American Drug Enforcement Agency but somehow, his cover had been blown and that the "situation has now become potentially dangerous for us here and has required us to take emergency measures". The family had been forced into a Federal Witness Protection Program as a result. The letter then went on to give instructions on how his possessions should be dealt with.

The family were left confused and suspicious. There was no concrete proof that the missive had been written by Xavier and grammatical mistakes strongly suggested it had not. Lies within the letter were quickly spotted. 'Xavier' had claimed that his metallic-blue Citroën had been given to a friend but this simply wasn't true. Equally disturbing was the warning not to poke around on the back terrace. Whatever did it all mean?

While family members attempted to make sense of the strange events unfolding, nearby neighbours of the Dupont de Ligonnes were becoming anxious over the sudden quietness of 55 Boulevard Robert-Schuman. The family home was normally a riot of noise and movement but now all was still.

On 13 April, a neighbour called the police telling them of her concerns. They arrived to find a note had been taped to the letter box stating "Please return all correspondence to sender. Thank you". Family photographs had been taken from the walls and linen had been stripped from the beds but there was no sign that any crime had occurred. Relatives were not convinced and continued to lodge complaints resulting in five police visits, but it was on the sixth and final visit that the massacre was discovered.

During a thorough search of the back garden on 21 April, two graves were discovered under the terrace patio in a dark, cramped crawl space. One contained the remains of Agnès, Arthur, Anne and Benoît, while the other held the body of Thomas. The two family dogs had also been killed and hidden beneath the patio. The graves had been scattered with religious icons in some twisted funeral ceremony. A wife and her children had been brutally murdered but where was their father?

The police began tracing Xavier's last known steps in the hopes that they could track him

down. The Citroën C5, which had supposedly been given to a friend, was spotted leaving the car park of a hotel near Toulouse, where Xavier had spent the night. He had then travelled southeast using a false name but still using his credit card and was clearly heading towards his old stomping ground in Var. It was here that he attempted to meet up with



A judicial seal is secured across the front door of the family home as the entire house becomes a crime scene



Xavier Dupont de Ligonnes' registration form for the local rifle club where he practiced shooting after inheriting the .22 rifle

### THE POLICE ARE CALLED 13 APRIL 2011

Neighbours become suspicious of Agnès' stationary car and call the police. They search the property but are not overly concerned. Xavier attempts to contact an ex-girlfriend.

### ONE LAST CCTV IMAGE 14 APRIL 2011

Xavier is caught on camera for the last time as he enters a hotel in Var.

### AN INVESTIGATION BEGINS 19 APRIL 2011

Having searched the property five times to no avail, an investigation is set up. Police are concerned by Xavier's suspicious purchases.

### A GRUESOME DISCOVERY 21 APRIL 2011

The bodies of Agnès and her four children are found under the terrace patio. The abandoned Citroën C5 is found.





Xavier Dupont de Ligonnès stares defiantly at the camera. Was this man really capable of murdering his wife and four children in cold blood?

an ex-girlfriend but the reunion never took place. Further sightings followed, the final confirmed image being captured on 14 April by a surveillance camera in the town of Roquebrune-sur-Argens. The following morning Xavier abandoned his car and disappeared for good and, with the discovery of the bodies beneath the patio terrace, he became a wanted man.

Autopsies, carried out the day after the bodies were unearthed, showed that the children had been drugged with sleeping pills before being shot twice in the back of the head. Agnès had also been shot but her body contained no traces of the drug. It seemed that whoever had killed her knew that she used a sleep apnea machine and had turned it off during the night. The murder weapon had been a .22 rifle, instantly linking the bodies to their absent father. Crime scene investigators scoured the property looking for clues and were baffled by the lack of physical evidence. How was it possible to fire ten bullets without leaving behind a single drop of blood?

The behaviour of the Nantes prosecutor compounded the mystery by insisting that the family be buried as soon as possible, and strongly advising that relatives should not view the victims' bodies. Who then, formally identified the Dupont de Ligonnès?

The hunt was on to track down Xavier, either as a sixth victim or as the killer. Many believed that the errant father had murdered his family only to commit suicide elsewhere. This would certainly explain the openness of his actions after apparently fleeing the murder scene. The last sighting had been in Roquebrune-sur-Argens where he checked out of a hotel, carrying nothing but a small backpack. Since the surrounding area consisted of sheer cliffs, mountains, caves and plunging crevices, police employed professional spelunkers to search for his body. Their efforts were futile, however, and no trace of Xavier has ever been found.

Later investigations have proved equally disappointing. The body of a man found in the mountains two years later, followed by the discovery of some bones in a nearby forest in April 2015, turned out not to be the missing suspect but the hunt continues and the mystery lingers. The arrival of a photograph of Arthur and Benoît, sent to a journalist in Nantes, caused a ripple of excitement. The image of the two sons of Xavier sitting at a kitchen table was, in itself, unremarkable, but an inscription scrawled on the reverse reading "I'm still alive" looked highly promising. Sadly, the photo, dated 11 July 2015, was yet another dead end since neither the



The police discovered that Xavier stayed at the luxury hotel Auberge de Cassagne in Le Pontet on 12 April



A partial view taken on 23 April 2011 shows the room of the Auberge de Cassagne where Xavier spent the night of 12 April

## THE AUTOPSIES 22 APRIL 2011

Autopsies reveal all victims have been shot with a .22 rifle. An international arrest warrant is issued for Xavier.

## THE FUNERAL 28 APRIL 2011

The family's funeral is held in Nantes. The bodies are cremated. A private ceremony is held two days later in Noyers-sur-Serein, home of Agnès' family.

## THE SEARCH FOR XAVIER CONTINUES 23 JUNE 2011

Caving experts are called in to search Roquebrune-sur-Argens, since they believe Xavier may have committed suicide.

## BRINGING UP OLD BODIES 9 APRIL 2013

Investigators begin searching the old mines around Cannet-des-Maures, where the bodies of the Massié family were found in 1981.



## UNEXPLAINED DEATHS

photographer or the sender could be established. Far from aiding the investigation, the picture and its enigmatic inscription merely confused the situation further.

Almost a decade later and the police are no closer to solving the case of the Dupont de Lignon family. In truth, there are far more questions than answers. Is Xavier the brutal killer of his entire family and if so, why? We know that his marriage was not the perfect union that the couple carefully portrayed. Agnès had complained online that "there is no more tenderness between us, no more attention, no softness, no sex". She went on to say that her husband had even claimed "if we could all die tomorrow, that would be better". So did Xavier obliterate his family only to commit suicide a few days later? It would explain his lack of interest in covering his tracks but if that is the case, where is the body? There would be no point in him attempting to hide his death and if he had killed himself while out on the mountain trails, surely someone would have stumbled upon it by now?

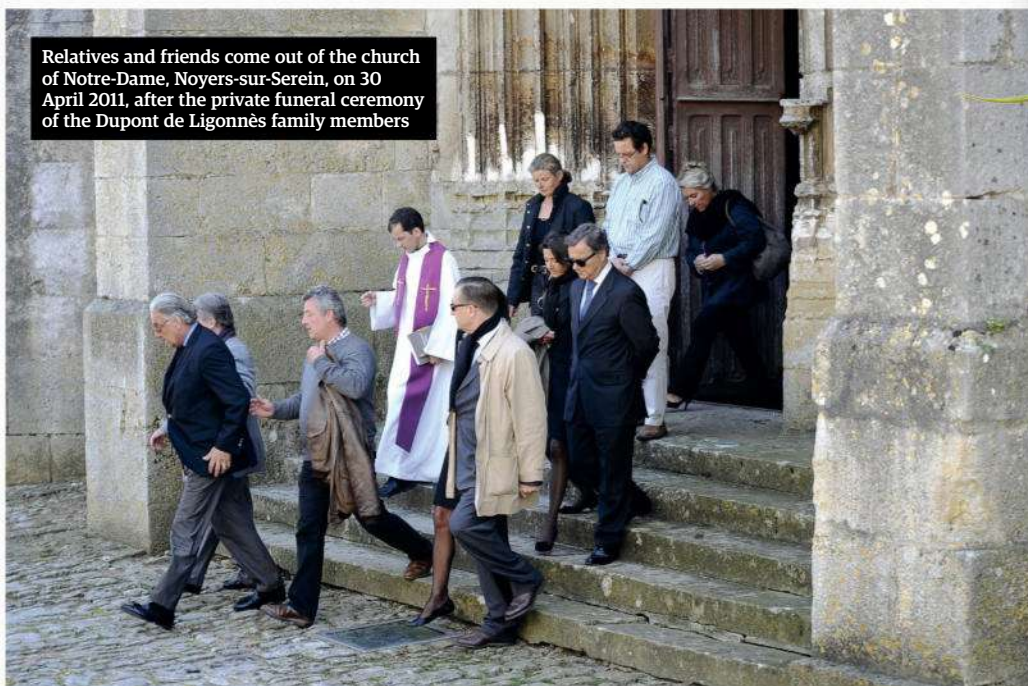
Why send the strange letter claiming his involvement in the DEA and the subsequent need to enter Witness Protection? If this were truly the case, then any communication with his relatives would have been utterly forbidden. If the family had indeed left France for a new life in America, who were the bodies buried under the terrace? No conclusive DNA testing was carried out and the remaining family members were never given the opportunity to verify the corpses. Considering the complexity of the case, the bodies were released for burial remarkably soon after their discovery.

The questions continue to mount up but, frustratingly, answers are not forthcoming, even though sightings of Xavier persist. A man, thought to be the missing father, was arrested in Glasgow, Scotland, as recently as 2019. Initially, the situation looked promising since his fingerprints appeared to be a match. However, DNA testing proved it to be nothing more than another disappointing dead end.

At the end of the purported letter from Xavier to his relatives, having explained the reason for their sudden departure, he sends his love and signs off "we'll have so many stories to tell you later on!" It seems the world will have to wait to hear them.



Flowers, candles, toys and photographs are left outside the family home by friends and neighbours



Relatives and friends come out of the church of Notre-Dame, Noyers-sur-Serein, on 30 April 2011, after the private funeral ceremony of the Dupont de Lignon family members

### A FRUITLESS SEARCH

**2 MAY 2013**

Yet another search is carried out but, once again, it ends in disappointment.

### BONES!

**28 APRIL 2015**

Bones are discovered close to where Xavier disappeared alongside a bill dated 2011.

### FURTHER DISAPPOINTMENT

**1 MAY 2015**

DNA analysis proves that the bones do not belong to Xavier.

### A MYSTERIOUS PACKAGE

**11 JULY 2015**

A photograph of Arthur and Benoît is mailed to a journalist in Nantes. "I'm still alive" is written on the reverse.



**“ALMOST A DECADE LATER AND THE POLICE ARE NO CLOSER TO SOLVING THE CASE OF THE DUPONT DE LIGONNÈS FAMILY. IN TRUTH, THERE ARE FAR MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS”**



The Dupont de Lignonès children during happier times

Getty Images



Getty Images



Messages were stuck on the door of the Dupont de Lignonès family house as part of a silent march to mark the first anniversary of the murders

Getty Images

## THE MONASTERY RAID 9 JANUARY 2018

Armed police raid the Saint-Desert Monastery in Roquebrune-sur-Argens after worshippers claim to have spotted him pretending to be a monk. It turns out to be another wild goose chase.

## A SIGHTING IN SCOTLAND 11 OCTOBER 2019

A man suspected of being Xavier is arrested at Glasgow Airport after it is thought that he is using a stolen French passport.

## MORE DNA TESTS 12 OCTOBER 2019

Further tests are carried out only to reveal that the suspect is not Xavier Dupont de Lignonès.

## UNSOLVED MYSTERIES 8 JULY 2020

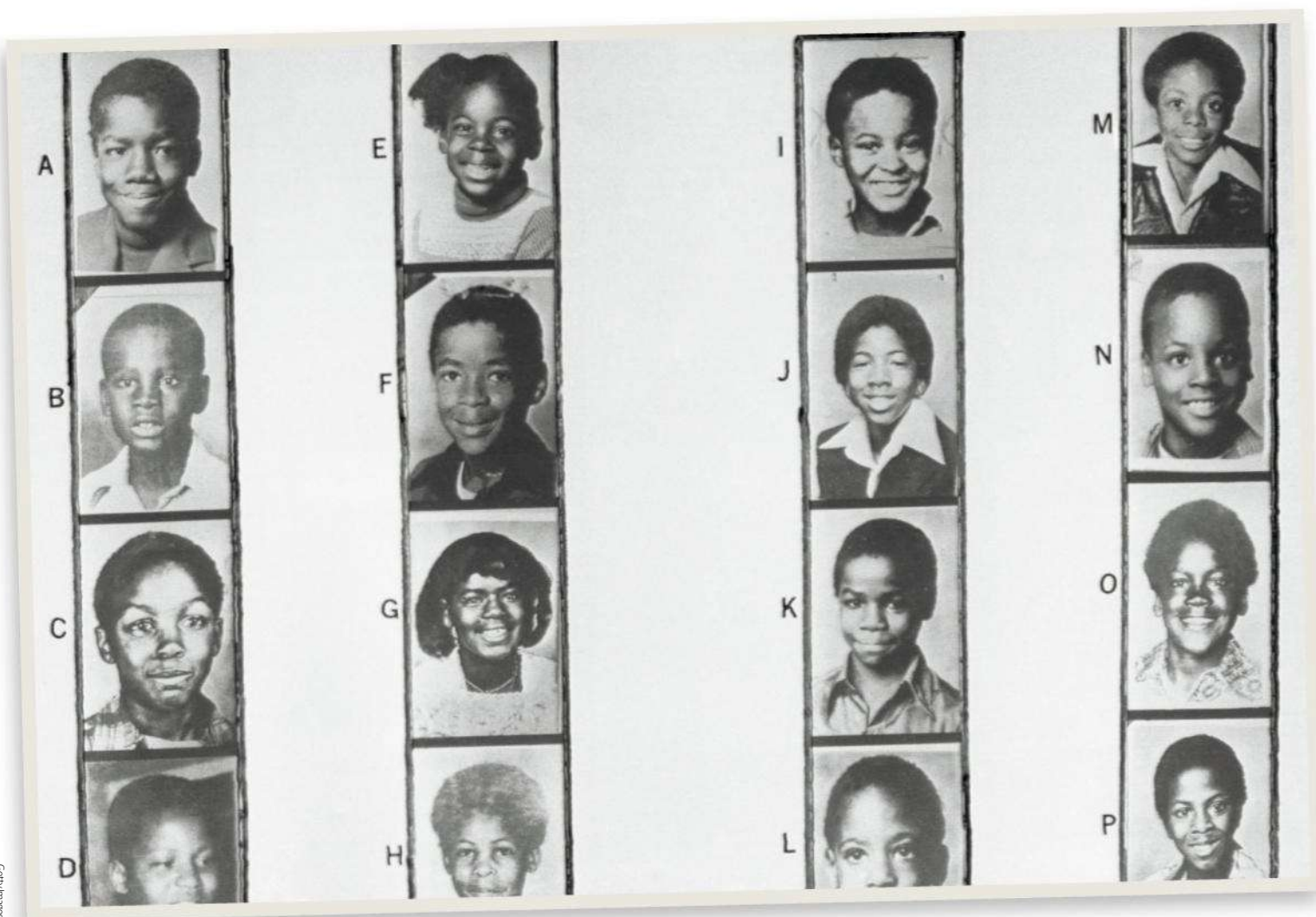
Netflix releases an episode of *Unsolved Mysteries* entitled 'House of Terror', featuring the strange deaths of the Dupont de Lignonès family and the disappearance of their patriarch, Xavier.



# THE ATLANTA CHILD MURDERS RE-EXAMINED

Forty years after the Atlanta Child Murders shocked the world there are still many unanswered questions, and when even the victims' mothers are unconvinced by Wayne Williams' guilt, it's time the case was re-examined...

WRITTEN BY JOANNA ELPHICK





Williams was convicted of the murders of Nathaniel Cater and Jimmy Ray Payne





**W**hen Wayne Williams was charged and convicted of murdering two young adults, it also ended a two-year investigation into the killing of at least 28 African-American children, the assumption being that he had murdered them all. But as time went by, people began to doubt the conviction and take Williams' protestations of innocence a little more seriously.

The killer first struck in the summer of 1979 when the bodies of two 14-year-old boys were discovered in a remote wooded area of Atlanta. Edward Smith had vanished on the 21 July and had been shot in the back. Alfred Evans went missing four days later only to be found strangled and abandoned on nearby wasteland. Ten days later, a third victim went missing, but this time the body of Milton Harvey was not located until two months later. So far the children had all been young teenagers but on 21 October, nine-year-old Yusuf Bell failed to return home after running an errand for a neighbour. Witnesses last saw the boy climbing into a blue car. His strangled corpse was discovered 18 days later in an abandoned school, but police failed to spot a connection to the previous children's

deaths. The abduction and murder of a female child, 12-year-old Angel Lanier, confused the matter further. Just how many child killers were there hunting across the Atlanta region?

Eleven-year-old Jeffery Mathis was next to disappear, just one week after Angel's murder. His little body would not be found for another 11 months, making cause of death an impossible task. A further 11 young victims were snatched and murdered before the year was out, including the youngest victim, seven-year-old LaTonya Wilson who, witnesses stated, had been abducted from her home by two men. While the majority of the children had been strangled, two boys, Eric Middlebrooks and Patrick Rogers, died from blunt force trauma to the head. Nine-year-old Anthony Carter, meanwhile, had been stabbed multiple times. On at least four occasions, the cause of death remained undetermined due to

the deteriorated state of the victims' bodies. Finding a recognisable pattern was going to be extremely difficult.

Within a year of the first deaths, victims began turning up at a rate of roughly one per month, starting with the abduction of 14-year-old Lubie Geter. His best friend, Terry Pue, was murdered 19 days later. The Black community of Atlanta were both terrified for their families and furious at the lack of action. Parents started picking up their children from school and stopped them from playing on the waste ground near their homes. The fear was palpable and the people demanded justice and protection.

Over one hundred of Atlanta's finest officers interviewed 20,000 people face-to-face while 15,000 more individuals were questioned over the telephone. Ronald Reagan, the president at the time, pledged a substantial grant to help fund

**“THE BLACK COMMUNITY OF ATLANTA WERE BOTH TERRIFIED FOR THEIR FAMILIES AND FURIOUS AT THE LACK OF ACTION FROM THE POLICE”**







Were the Ku Klux Klan involved in the Atlanta Child Murders?

Getty Images

the investigation, while 35 FBI agents were sent to Atlanta in the hopes that a specially crafted task force, utilising the latest technology and profiling techniques, might solve the case and end the tsunami wave of fear sweeping Georgia. Meanwhile bounty hunters came from far and wide in order to grab a share of the \$100,000 reward money and become an international hero and local residents, doubting the capabilities of the lawmen, walked the streets at night, armed with baseball bats, desperately searching for the man who was killing their children.

Curfews were imposed but still the children went missing. The police had very little to go on but, in a desperate bid to calm the media frenzy, someone released a vital piece of information. Scene of crime investigators had managed to recover a selection of hairs and fibres from a few of the bodies and this, they believed, would inevitably lead them to the culprit. Two types of fibre were particularly interesting, yellow-green nylon and violet acetate. The coarse yellow-green fibres were thought to have originated from a rug or carpet and were immediately taken by the FBI who determined that it had been manufactured by Wellman Inc, a textile company in Boston. Further analysis revealed the dye used, tracking the fibres to a carpet manufacturer in Dalton, Georgia. The carpet, known as 'Luxaire', was made in a variety of colours, this one being 'English Olive'. Further fibres were identified as rayon, the type of material used to make car mats.

The decision to reveal their one clue was an unmitigated disaster since the killer had now been warned. The murders kept occurring but, from February 1981, were no longer dumped on

open waste ground. Now the killer was disposing of the bodies in the nearby rivers, thereby washing away the only evidence the police had to link the crimes to the criminal.

Shortly after this ill-conceived revelation, the victim typology altered. The last teenager to be murdered was 17-year-old William Barrett, who disappeared on 11 May 1981, while the remaining six victims were all in their twenties. Eddie Duncan, Larry Rogers, Michael McIntosh and Jimmy Ray Payne ranged in age from 20 to 23 and were all either strangled or asphyxiated. Then, in April of the same year, 28-year-old John Porter went missing. Once recovered, his body was discovered to have been covered in multiple stab wounds, the victim of a frenzied attack. This was quite different to the majority of the other murders and yet, the crime would later be attributed to Wayne Williams.

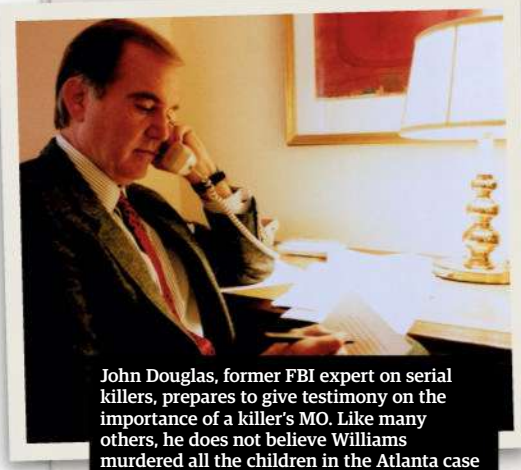
Having given away their best evidence to link the murders together, the FBI and police units decided to begin patrolling the length of the Chattahoochee River, one of the killer's favourite dumping grounds since the media exposé. In the early hours of 22 May 1981, a team of officers were staking out the South Drive Bridge that spanned the Chattahoochee River. Two Atlanta policemen and two FBI agents were chatting to one another as they patrolled the river's edge when they heard a loud splash in the darkness. While two men ran back to the road in order to seal off the bridge, the other officers dived into the water in a desperate bid to find what had been dropped in there. Unfortunately, it was impossible to see anything in the early morning half-light and it would be another two days before

## MODUS OPERANDI

**'Leopards don't change their spots,' so the saying goes. The same could be said for serial killers when it comes to their particular habits**

By the late 1970s, the FBI's Behavioural Sciences Unit had gathered together a vast amount of information regarding the conduct of serial killers. It soon became apparent that even the most outrageous of criminal behaviour can be categorised into certain predictable patterns. However, each individual killer will carry his own unique methodology, known as his modus operandi. The likelihood of a criminal altering his MO during a killing spree is infinitesimal and it is often such clues that leads an investigative team into separating the acts of different offenders working at the same time and in the same location.

An MO will include such factors as the choice of weapon, methods of disposing of the bodies, location, time of day, and selection of victims. This last point is highly pertinent when considering the likelihood of Williams being the killer of all of the Atlanta victims. They were predominantly young boys, suggesting possible homosexual urges. However, two of the proposed victims were little girls, a highly unlikely choice for such a serial killer. The bodies had been sexualised with one victim having another person's panties stuffed into her mouth. Such behaviour was not seen with any other Atlanta child murder.



John Douglas, former FBI expert on serial killers, prepares to give testimony on the importance of a killer's MO. Like many others, he does not believe Williams murdered all the children in the Atlanta case

Getty Images



Jimmy Ray Payne's family break down in tears during his funeral

## HOW SCIENCE CAN CATCH A KILLER

**In 1982, when Wayne Williams was implicated in the murder of at least 28 children and adolescents, forensic science – particularly DNA evidence – was still in its infancy. Today, more and more cases are being solved thanks to modern technology**

The discovery of fibres at a crime scene is considered valuable corroborating evidence and is often used during trials as a means to providing associations or exclusions between suspects, victims and locations. The Suffolk Ripper, Roy Whiting and Ian Huntley, to name but a few, were all convicted largely on fibre evidence thanks to their easy transference. Hair too, can be readily transferred between people. A simple Microscopy Test can determine basic differences between hair types. However, if this is inconclusive, a DNA profile can be generated from the hair root, if available. DNA profiling has been a staple tool in forensic science since 1986; any earlier attempts were very basic, suggesting a re-examination of the forensic evidence in the Williams' trial would be highly beneficial. Although DNA may be unique, it is impossible to test the entire genome and so a number of variable regions are chosen. Known as 'short tandem repeats', initial investigations looked at four such regions, but, with technological advances, investigators now examine up to 24. This means there is less chance of two suspects presenting the same profile. Today, even very close family members can be separated and clearly identified.



the body of 27-year-old Nathaniel Cater would be discovered, a mile downstream.

Police stopped a number of drivers crossing the river in those early hours. One of them, Wayne Bertram Williams, seemed particularly interesting since, after the initial splash, he had turned his Chevrolet station wagon around and double-backed across the bridge. At the police station, he had explained that he had been out and about bright and early in order to audition a young woman, Cheryl Johnson, as he was looking for a singer. He was, he said, a talent scout, DJ and photographer among other things. The police let him go but when all attempts to find Ms Johnson or any record of her appointment to corroborate his reason for being on the bridge at that time failed, Mr Williams instantly became a person of interest. FBI criminal profiler, John E Douglas, agreed that 23-year-old Wayne Williams matched the profile that he had assembled so a round-the-clock surveillance team was set up and, on 3 June, a search warrant was finally obtained for his house and station wagon.

Williams was a strange little man who, at 23 years of age, still lived with his parents in a suburb of Dixie Hills in Atlanta. Although

he professed to be a talent recruiter, his main income seemed to come from photographing crime and accident scenes and selling them on to media outlets. From time to time he would ride alongside the evening ambulance drivers, but usually, Williams would listen in to his short-wave radio in order to monitor police activity, making sure that he was the first at the scene. His educated parents were both teachers, a fact that weighed heavy on college drop-out Wayne who hid his sense of inadequacy behind a swaggering veneer of disdain for his fellow residents of Atlanta. He was known in the neighbourhood as an homosexual with a vicious streak. On closer inspection, investigators discovered that in 1976, three years before the first of the murders, he had been arrested and charged with impersonating an officer of the law. Wayne Williams was a failure who relied upon his parents to reassure him of his self-worth while helping to feed and clothe him.

Special Agent John Douglas had developed a profile of the Atlanta Child Killer and police were amazed at the resemblance to their number one suspect. The murderer, so the profile stated, would be living in the area, close to his victims, and would have been over-cossetted by his parents.



Modern technological advances mean that hair analysis is far more reliable today



He would have an occupation that allowed him to slip in and out of remote locations and would attempt to remain inconspicuous, choosing to wear dark-coloured clothing. There was a good chance that he had been caught impersonating law enforcement in his past. He would be single and, uncharacteristically for a serial killer, he would be Black. Police were convinced that they had found their man. On meeting Williams, Douglas described him as "an angry young man seeking power".

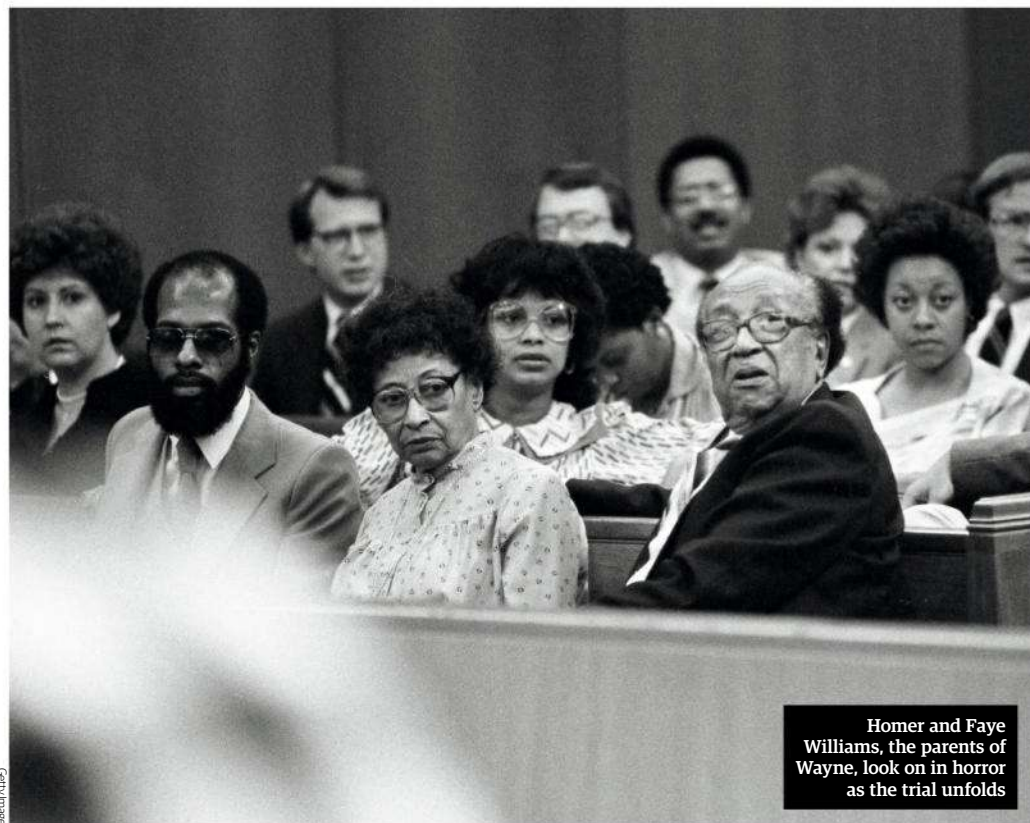
The problem was, there seemed to be little in the way of hard evidence linking Williams to the crimes other than his appearance on the James Jackson Parkway Bridge on 22 May. It was hoped that a thorough search of his home would provide further evidence. The first thing investigators noticed when entering Mr and Mrs Williams' residence was the olive green carpet. After careful analysis it was established that the flooring was 'Luxaire', just like the fibres recovered from a few of the earlier bodies. Despite his lifeless corpse being thrown into the rushing waters of the Chattahoochee River, an olive green fibre had also been recovered from Nathaniel Cater's hair.

Meanwhile, a comprehensive examination of Williams' station wagon revealed more surprises.

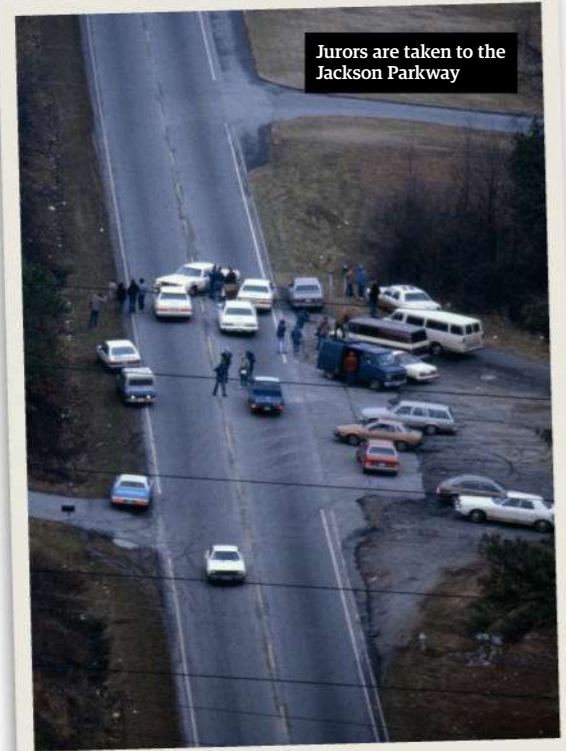
A single fragment of rayon, found on Jimmy Ray Payne's shorts, matched the carpeting in the vehicle. The discovery of a 24-inch nylon cord which, investigators later claimed, matched the ligature marks found around the necks of various victims, and a pair of gloves, were highly suspicious to say the very least. Dog hairs, meticulously picked up from the back seat, corresponded with hair samples found on a number of previous bodies.

On 21 June 1981, the police arrested Williams, but without any fingerprints or even a murder weapon, they decided to err on the side of caution, and, much to the voluble protests of the other victims' parents, he was charged with the first-degree murder of Nathaniel Cater and Jimmy Ray Payne only. The prosecution's case would rest solely on the circumstantial fibre evidence and would come down to the law of averages. After all, what were the odds that such fibres would find themselves on these two individuals when the Luxaire carpet, found in Williams' home, had been manufactured and sold to cover no more than 6.7 billion square yards? The answer, they argued, was virtually incalculable considering that fibres from the car were also discovered on the young men.

**"DESPITE HIS LIFELESS BODY BEING THROWN INTO THE CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER, AN OLIVE GREEN FIBRE HAD BEEN RECOVERED FROM NATHANIEL CATER'S HAIR"**



Homer and Faye Williams, the parents of Wayne, look on in horror as the trial unfolds



Jurors are taken to the Jackson Parkway

The trial began on 6 January 1982 and ended 52 days later with the jury finding Williams guilty of the murders of Jimmy Ray Payne and Nathaniel Cater. When Williams' lawyer scoffed at the weak evidence, a startling ruling by the judge allowed the prosecution to bring forward fibre evidence which linked Williams with other victims despite the fact that he had not been officially accused of their murders. Twenty-one further victims, both children and young adults, were attributed to him but not proven. Their cases were subsequently closed after the Atlanta Special Police Task Force claimed that the fibre evidence clearly linked all deaths back to him. Six more murders remain unresolved to this day.

No-one, with the exception of Wayne Williams himself, has argued that he is innocent of all the crimes, but there is a growing number of individuals who are convinced that he was wrongfully blamed for at least some of the Atlanta Child Murders. Indeed, it could be argued that he was found guilty under the laws of probability rather than the laws of the country. If that is the case, then another killer still roams the highways and byways of Atlanta.

The jury had been mesmerised by the prosecution's statistical analysis, carefully presented in the form of 40 charts and over 300 photographs of dog hairs and carpet fibres. However, far less time in court was given to the chances that one man would change his modus operandi so dramatically across a comparatively short space of time, swapping between victim types and murder methodology. Having presented the Atlanta Law Enforcement officers with an initial profile, John Douglas has admitted that, while he firmly believes Williams is guilty of



many of the murders, he doesn't think that all the killings should be attributed to him. In fact, he is quite convinced that there "isn't a single offender". Former Atlanta police detective, Danny Agan, supports the claim, stating that it seems "unlikely that Williams... who prosecutors claimed was attracted to boys, killed the two girls who were among the victims".

The case has rumbled on for years with further investigations taking place in 2007. Scientific analysis of the dog hairs found on some of the victims were, once again, examined against Williams' dog while DNA tests were carried out on human hairs found on the victims but thought to belong to the killer. No conclusive proof was forthcoming.

Rumours of possible Ku Klux Klan involvement have been raised on numerous occasions, supported by many of the victims' grieving parents. A two-month, top-secret investigation into the KKK's activities, known as the 8100 File, took place during the Atlanta Child Murders but was kept out of the trial. Had the information accumulated by the investigation on the movements of the 10,000 white supremacists been revealed, it would have almost certainly sparked a violent race riot in an area that was already a powder keg of emotions. As a result, information on possible white suspects have been buried along with the file.

Wayne Williams continues to maintain his innocence and many mothers are still fighting for justice after their children's cases were closed. After one such parent, the mother of 13-year-old victim Curtis Walker, met Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms, the case was re-examined once again in 2019, giving hope for both the families and, potentially, the suspect. The case is particularly personal for the mayor who was a nine-year-old schoolgirl living in Atlanta when

the disappearances began. The latest in forensic technology is currently being utilised, overseen by a joint task force consisting of the Atlanta Police Department, Fulton County District Attorney's Office and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Spurred on by the Black Lives Matter movement, Mayor Bottoms is determined to do all that she can to solve the murders.

Meanwhile, the Atlanta Children's Memorial Taskforce, a committee group established by Mayor Bottoms, continues to keep the memory of these tragic victims alive in the hearts and minds of the people of Atlanta. A monument featuring an eternal flame is in development and is planned to be installed at their City Hall.

Wayne Williams is currently serving two consecutive life terms and, while many believe he is at least guilty of some of the murders, he continues to maintain he is innocent, as much a victim of the Atlanta Child Killer as the little children and young men found abandoned by the wayside or floating down the Chattahoochee River. On hearing of the proposed re-examination of evidence, he released a statement at a news conference via the Wayne Williams Freedom Project, in which he declared: "I stand fully ready and willing to cooperate with any renewed investigation to find the truth on what happened with the purpose of straightening up any lies and misconceptions of my unjust convictions."

The Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles have repeatedly denied all attempts by Williams for an early release as they believe he is still a threat to society and has shown no sign of repentance. Should the evidence continue to suggest his involvement in the murders or remain inconclusive one way or the other, the next date for parole consideration has been set for November 2027. It seems his future freedom still hangs by a hair - a dog hair, to be precise.

**"WAYNE WILLIAMS  
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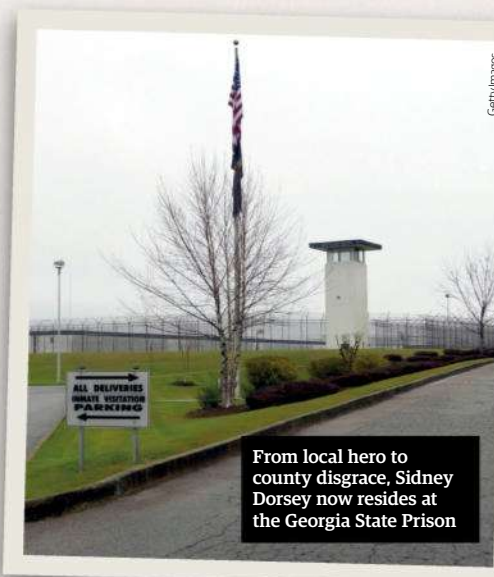
## THE SHERIFF WHO CROSSED THE LINE

**As the first African-American to serve as sheriff of DeKalb County, Sidney Dorsey was considered a local hero by the Black community of Atlanta. Sadly, he failed to live up to his image**

Sidney Dorsey had been highly respected by the townsfolk of DeKalb County. While serving as an Atlanta homicide detective, he had overseen the first search of Wayne Williams' house and was later instrumental in raising concerns over the extent of his involvement in the child murders. However, during his time as sheriff he had violated his oath of office on numerous occasions, through theft and racketeering. When he was defeated in the 2000 local county sheriff's election by police veteran Derwin Brown, Dorsey was both furious and panic-stricken. Voters had elected Brown predominantly because of his

promise to deal with corruption within the force and Dorsey was terrified of what he might discover during his investigations.

On 15 December 2000, Derwin was in a hurry to get home as it was his wife's birthday. Having popped into a nearby shop to buy a dozen roses, he pulled up on his driveway only to be ambushed before making it to the front door. He was struck down in a hail of bullets, at least ten of which hit their target. At the time, Dorsey claimed he was innocent but in 2007 he confessed to his part in the murder while serving life in Georgia State Prison.







Wayne Williams sits in the back of a police vehicle, waiting to be escorted to his trial

Getty Images



# MYSTERY OF THE YUBA COUNTY 5

Five young men kissed their families goodbye and drove off to a basketball game. Four returned months later in body bags and one never returned at all.

What happened on that freezing cold night?

WRITTEN BY JOANNA ELPHICK







## UNEXPLAINED DEATHS

It was a freezing cold evening on 24 February 1978 when five close friends, Jackie Huett, Ted Weiher, Jack Madruga, William Sterling and Gary Dale Mathias, decided to take a mini road trip, 75 kilometres from their home town of Yuba City to Chico in order to catch a basketball game. Although it was cold out, the young men didn't feel the need for jackets, as they intended to drive up in Jack Madruga's beloved 1969 Mercury Montego and would be coming straight home after the game finished at around 10pm. It was important that they returned home as quickly as possible when they were done because the group were playing a game themselves the following day. It was a big event for their team, the 'Gateway Gators', and they wanted to be up and ready good and early on Saturday morning.

### WRONG TURN

The game had been a good one, and as they clambered back into the car and pulled out of the California State University carpark they decided to celebrate with some snacks. Three blocks away they found a late-night market and so pulled in off the road. The clerk at Behr's Market would be extremely useful to the police when the investigation was underway, because he remembered the exact time they showed up and what the men bought. He had been slightly irritated by their arrival as it was closing time and he wanted to shut up shop and go home. The men had promised to be quick but had then proceeded to buy "half the store", including milk, Pepsi, a Hostess cherry pie, various chocolate bars and a Langendorf lemon pie. Laughing and joking, the group paid for their food and climbed back in the car, ready to go home. But the young men didn't go home, and from that point onwards their movements became inexplicable.

It was a straightforward journey from Chico back to Yuba City. The men knew the route perfectly

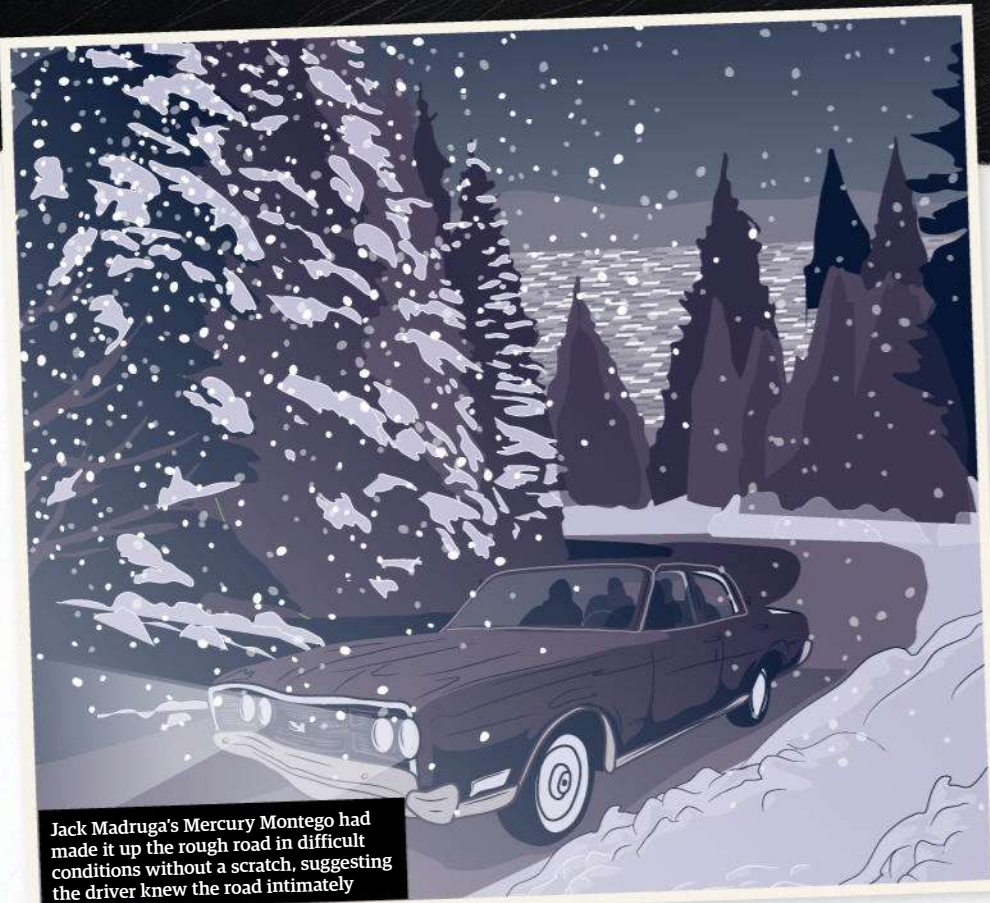
well; along Highway 70, cutting through the Central Valley. It should have taken them about an hour to drive the 75 kilometres, especially since the driving conditions were clear. Although it was bitterly cold, the snow had not started to fall across the lowland areas and it was a bright, starry night.

However, the group did not take that route. Instead, they turned the car around and began travelling in completely the wrong direction. The car would eventually be found four days later, on Tuesday 28 February, 115 kilometres from Chico, high up on a lonely mountain road near Oroville, along the Rogers Cow Camp area. Whatever had possessed them to travel 2.5-hours up a mountain dirt track, at an elevation of over 1,375 metres, through thick snow into the Plumas National Forest

when they had fully intended to make the one-hour journey home across the flatlands? Nobody could understand it, but as the parents gathered to give their statements to the police, it soon became apparent that this was no ordinary disappearance and these were not your average young men.

### FIVE GOOD MEN

Ted Weiher's mother was the first to realise something was wrong when she went to wake up her son, as he had requested, and he had not come home. She rang William Sterling's mother Juanita in a blind panic only to find that William had failed to come home too. In fact, none of the men had made it back the previous night. For most families, a group of young men not coming straight home



Jack Madruga's Mercury Montego had made it up the rough road in difficult conditions without a scratch, suggesting the driver knew the road intimately

Five young men with their whole lives ahead of them disappeared one cold February evening, never to be seen alive again



**JACKIE  
HUETT**



**WILLIAM  
STERLING**



**JACK  
MADRUGA**



**THEODORE  
WEIHER**



**GARY  
MATHIAS**





The Plumas National Forest just above Feather River after the big thaw. On that fateful night in February 1978, the view was decidedly less beautiful

after a night out would not be a cause for alarm, but these men were slightly different and, under the circumstances, there was every reason to be fearful. The friends all suffered in varying degrees from developmental disabilities and were enrolled in a day program for mentally handicapped adults. Each one lived at home with his parents.

At 32 years old, Ted Weiher was the eldest. Although he was considered very slow, the gentle giant had tried to hold down a job as a janitor, but it had proved too difficult and his family had advised him to give it up. He was particularly close to Jackie Huett, the youngest member of the group, who at 24 walked with a stooped head and struggled to use the telephone without support. William Sterling was deeply religious and was often found reading passages from the Bible to other handicapped and sick patients at the local psychiatric hospital. His best friend, Jack Madruga, had never been diagnosed with any mental illness but clearly had a very low IQ. However, he had gained a driver's licence and had served in the army.

25-year-old Gary Dale Mathias was the last member of the gang. He had also served in the army but had been given psychiatric discharge after

suffering from drug problems while in Germany five years earlier. Having been charged with two counts of assault, Gary was diagnosed with schizophrenia and was subsequently put under a doctor's care. His stepfather Bob ensured that he took his medication of Cogentin and Stellazine, and had been relieved to notice a marked improvement in his condition. On the night of the basketball game he had taken his tablets as usual, but left them at home because he intended to be back the following day, easily in time for his next dose.

The men each had their problems, but they all coped well and their parents all believed that they were perfectly able to make their way to and from a game without getting into trouble. They were all 'good men' who did as they were told and never deviated from a plan once it had been decided upon. A sudden change would have unnerved them and would have been entirely out of character. The parents all agreed that, should something have gone awry, the five friends would have stuck together, supporting one another as best they could and would certainly not have abandoned each other if at all possible. However, later evidence would suggest that they had done just that.

## THE MYSTERY BEGINS

Two of them could drive, all had held down menial jobs at some point and none of them would have reneged on the upcoming Gateway Gators match. Their parents were understandably terrified, and when they didn't show in time for the big game, the local police were called and an investigation was launched. Sunday and Monday dragged by agonisingly slowly, but on Tuesday Jack Madruga's pride and joy, his Mercury Montego, was discovered. High up in the Sierra Nevada mountains above the Feather River, a search team located the car in a small drift just beyond Elke Retreat. The wheels had appeared to have spun in the snow, but the car was not stuck and could easily have been pushed backwards onto the dirt path. The floor and seats were littered with rubbish; chocolate bar wrappers, lemon and cherry pie boxes, a carton of milk and some empty Pepsi bottles. The men had clearly eaten their celebratory feast before leaving the vehicle. But why leave it at all? The petrol tank was at least one-quarter full and the car itself was not stuck. Although the keys were missing, the police had no problems in hot-wiring it and starting it up. There was nothing wrong with the vehicle at all - in fact it was suspiciously undamaged. The men must have travelled up the unmade track in dangerous conditions and somehow avoided every single bump and rut. The car was not designed for such terrain and yet it had survived the journey unscathed. Police decided that whoever had driven the car must have known the road like the back of his hand in order to have avoided any damage, but Mrs Madruga later testified that Jack never let

**"THE PARENTS ALL AGREED THAT, SHOULD SOMETHING HAVE GONE AWRY, THE FIVE FRIENDS WOULD HAVE STUCK TOGETHER"**





Jack Madruga's pride and joy, the 1969 turquoise and white Mercury Montego that was discovered up in the Plumas National Forest mountains, a 2.5-hour drive from Chico in the wrong direction to the men's homes

anybody else drive his car and that he had never been up that road before.

Forest Rangers searched the area with no luck, and five days into their investigation a violent storm blew in, dropping 23 centimetres of snow over any potential tracks. The investigation was postponed, leaving the anxious parents to wait until the spring thaw.

## A PECULIAR SIGHTING

While police waited for better weather conditions, a witness came forward claiming to have seen something suspicious on that Friday night. 55-year-old Joseph Shones had driven up the mountain road

**“AS JOSEPH SHONES CLIMBED OUT OF THE CAR HE SAW A GROUP OF PEOPLE, INCLUDING A NUMBER OF MEN AND A WOMAN WITH A BABY”**

during the night of the disappearance but had got his car stuck in snow about 45 metres beyond the spot where the Montego would later be found. He had been digging the wheels out when a sharp pain forced him to his knees. Shones believed he was having a heart attack, and doctors later confirmed

that this was the case. Having crawled back into his car, Shones turned the engine on and the heater up before passing out. During the night he awoke to the sound of whistling, and as he climbed out of the car he saw a group of people, including a number of men and a woman with a baby, walking up the road, lit up in the glare of headlights from a car and a truck. When he called for help, the lights went out, and he was plunged back into darkness.

A few hours later he was woken by the beam of a torch behind him. Once again he yelled for help, but the lights were extinguished and the whispering voices stopped. Shones was deeply unnerved by the experience, and as soon as he felt better he began to walk the 13 kilometres to the Mountain House Lodge, passing Jack Madruga's empty car on the way. He soon forgot all about the incident when he got safely home but was reminded of the peculiar sighting when police announced the bizarre disappearance of the men on the news. The moment he saw the photograph of the missing Mercury Montego he phoned the police. It soon became apparent that Joseph Shones had likely been the last person to see the men alive, but his statement only seemed to add to the list of unanswerable questions.

Meanwhile, the young men's families raised a \$2,600 reward for any information and waited for the thaw to arrive. The police became desperate, following misleading eyewitness accounts all over the county and eventually calling on psychics but, unsurprisingly, it was all to no avail.



Joseph Shones, who had suffered a mild heart attack near where Jack's car was later found, reported seeing a group of men and a woman with a baby by the road on the night the men disappeared



On 4 June, after the spring thaw, some motorcyclists riding up through the mountain road discovered a Forest Rangers' trailer approximately 30 kilometres further up from where Jack's car had been found. One of the windows had been smashed. As the motorcyclists opened the cabin door they were hit by a repugnant smell. Something had crawled in here and died. Sadly, it would turn out to be Ted Weiher.

## HOW THE MYSTERY UNFOLDED

The clues to unlocking the mystery lie scattered across the map, from Yuba City to Bucks Lake

Ted Weiher's emaciated body was found alone in the Forest Rangers' trailer. His shoes were missing and his feet were frostbitten



### ! EVENT THE RANGERS' TRAILER

They had evidently entered the trailer by breaking a window but did nothing to cover the hole once inside, even though the wind and snow was coming in. They must all have been in there at some point, so why leave when there was food and shelter?

### 🔍 CLUE OUTSIDE FOOD STORAGE HUT

The hut had enough dehydrated food to feed the men throughout the winter. It also housed the propane gas that could have kept them warm.

### 👤 VICTIM JACK AND WILLIAM'S BONES

William Sterling's bones were scattered over 15 metres and Jack Madruga's body was dragged to a nearby stream, his hand curled around his watch. He had been partially eaten by animals.

### 🔍 CLUE MERCURY MONTEGO

Jack Madruga's car had somehow made it all the way up the mountain on that rough road without a scratch, and yet he did not know the road. The window had been left open, something his mother said he would never have done.

### 👤 VICTIM JACKIE'S BONES

Jackie Huett's spinal column and then his skull were found after the thaw by his distraught father and search teams.

### 👁️ WITNESS BEHR'S MARKET CLERK

The store was three blocks away from the university. The clerk recalled how excited the men were because their team had won, giving police an insight into their state of mind before they went up into the mountains.

### 🔍 CLUE RED PICKUP TRUCK

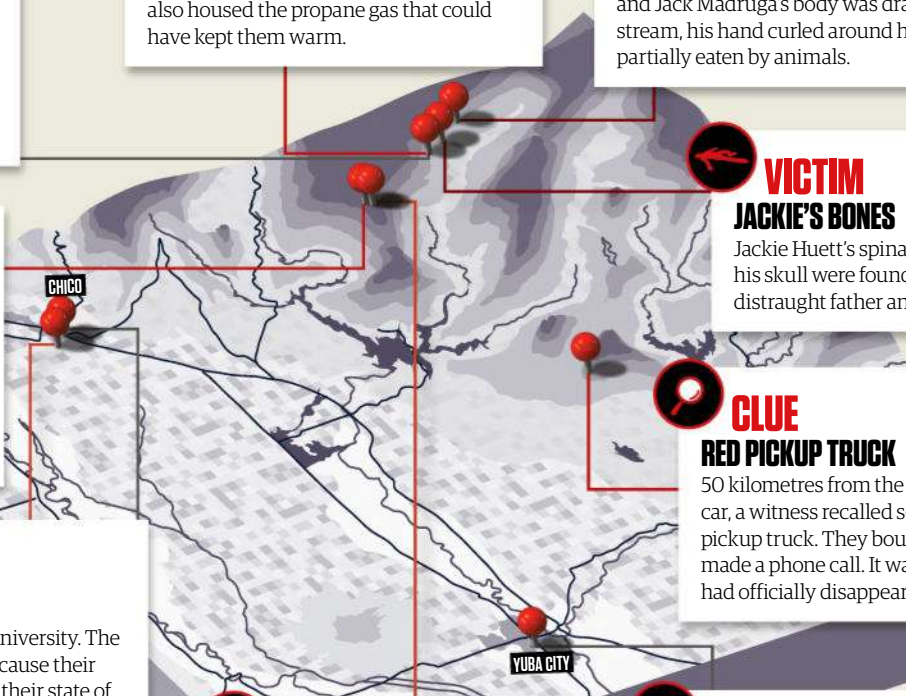
50 kilometres from the site of the abandoned car, a witness recalled seeing the men in a red pickup truck. They bought more snacks and made a phone call. It was two days after they had officially disappeared.

### 👁️ WITNESS JOSEPH SHONES

Shones was the last known person to see the men alive. Although he claimed to have witnessed a woman with a baby, it may have been one of the men hunched up to keep the cold out. He also mentioned the truck headlights, corroborating the 'red truck' witness account.

### ! EVENT HOME

The men all lived with their parents in Yuba City, California, and became firm friends after enrolling in a day program for mentally handicapped adults and discovering their shared love of basketball.



10 MILES

### ! EVENT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The basketball match was held at the California State University and ended at 10pm, when the men should have headed straight back to Yuba City.



# THE INVESTIGATION

Search and rescue teams scoured the surrounding area while police combed through the trailer in search of clues about the men

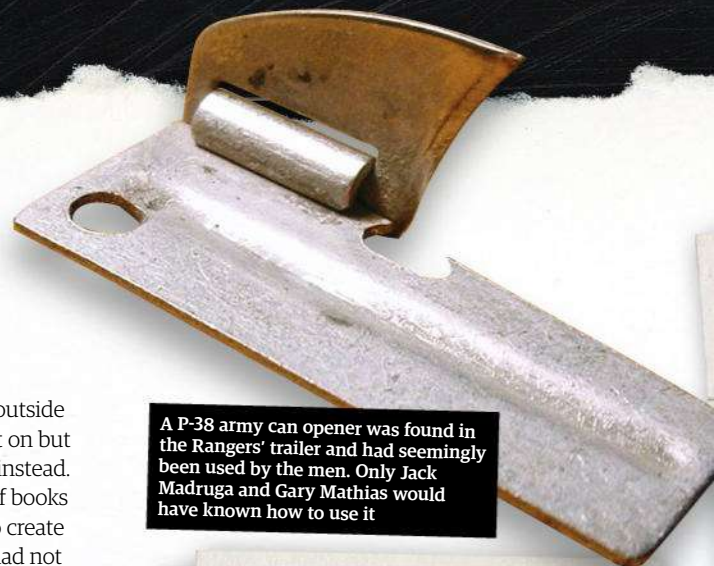
Far from providing answers, the body of Ted Weiher, lovingly wrapped in eight bedsheets, raised more questions. His shoes were missing, while Gary Mathias's trainers lay nearby. A watch that none of the families recognised had been placed on the bedside cabinet alongside Ted's ring. He had clearly starved to death, and yet there was plenty of food - enough for all the men - stored in an outside locker. Although there was no key available, the padlock was flimsy and could easily have been broken. Other cans had been opened with an Army P-38 can opener, which only Jack Madruga or Gary Mathias would have known how to use. The body was painfully thin, and it was estimated that he had lost up to 45 kilograms in weight while hundreds of dehydrated dinners had been just outside. The growth of beard on his face suggested he'd been hiding in the trailer for up to 13 weeks before he succumbed to starvation. His frostbitten feet revealed the arduous trek he must have endured through 30 kilometres of freezing snowdrifts to reach the trailer.

The cabin itself must have been extraordinarily cold, and yet they had done nothing to warm themselves. The trailer was gas heated, and police

discovered an unused propane tank in an outside shed. All they had needed to do was turn it on but they had chosen, or been forced, to freeze instead. Police officers found matches and plenty of books and furniture that could have been used to create a fire, but even this simple act of survival had not been attempted.

The search and rescue team fully expected to find all five men inside the trailer, but when they realised Ted's was the only corpse present, they began looking nearby. William Sterling and Jack Madruga were discovered the next day. Both were found on the other side of the road seven kilometres from the trailer, William no more than a collection of bones on the forest floor, while Jack Madruga's half-eaten body lay further up by a stream. Wild animals had clearly found him long before the police. The distraught families joined in the gruesome search. Jackie Huett's backbone was unearthed by his heartbroken father, along with pieces of his clothing. His skull, later identified by the family dentist, was discovered the following day.

Around one kilometre away, in the opposite direction, rangers found blankets and a rusted torch by the side of the mountain track, but it was never



A P-38 army can opener was found in the Rangers' trailer and had seemingly been used by the men. Only Jack Madruga and Gary Mathias would have known how to use it

## THE RED PICKUP TRUCK

On 3 March, a woman rang the police claiming to have seen the boys in a pickup truck two days after the disappearance. She had been working in a store in Brownsville, 50 kilometres away from the abandoned Mercury Montego, when the truck had pulled up. Two men came into the store, buying various snacks. She later identified them as Ted Weiher and Jackie Huett. Another man, William Sterling, got out to make a phone call and took Jackie with him. Jackie's family would later question the validity of this statement, because Jackie was terrified of phones and always got Ted Weiher to make a call for him. However, Joseph Shones distinctly remembered two sets of headlights, one from a truck, out on the mountain pass. If this was true, who owned the truck?

William Sterling and Jack Madruga's remains were found away from the trailer. What drove the two men to leave the shelter and their friends?



established if they had been used by the men or had merely been discarded by last year's hikers. Although this was all highly strange, the biggest question on the minds of the search and rescue team was obvious: where was Gary Mathias?

The undisputed leader of the group had obviously spent some time in the trailer because he had left his tennis shoes beside Ted Weiher's body. But where had he gone? Did he leave by himself, or did he leave with his other friends? If so, why hadn't the rangers discovered his body? Nothing seemed to make any sense. Special Agent John Thompson from the Californian Department of Justice was called in to assist in the investigation, but it didn't take him long to hit a brick wall, just as his predecessors had. Everybody seemed to come up with theories but nobody could give him the facts he so desperately needed. As reporters clamoured for answers he tried to show them the enormity of the task, stating, "No explanations. And a thousand leads. Every day you've got a thousand leads."

As time crawled by it became apparent that the police could not give the families what they wanted. Closure was a luxury these parents were unlikely to ever get.





## THE AFTERMATH

40 years later and the police are no nearer to solving this perplexing mystery

Warm spring thaws have followed the biting cold winds and heavy snowfall of the Sierra Nevada mountains for decades, but no new evidence has been revealed, leaving the families of Jack, Will, Ted, Jackie and Gary to only imagine what must have happened up there all those years ago. The questions are endless but the answers remain frustratingly out of reach.

The men all had their problems, and it was conceivable that they might have taken a wrong turn after the excitement of the game, heading in the opposite direction to home, but were they really so confused that, when they found themselves halfway up a mountain pass, they didn't realise their mistake and come back down? It seems something, or someone, forced them up Bucks Lane towards Palmetto.

If they had been mistaken in their belief that the car was stuck in snow and didn't have the foresight to 'bump' it out, why didn't they walk the 13 kilometres back down to Mountain House like Joseph Shones, instead of hiking 32 kilometres up the mountain in blizzard conditions on the off-chance that they might find help? They would have had to pass Mountain House on their drive up, and were guaranteed a warm place to stay. Their actions were inexplicable.

**"THEY COULD HAVE SURVIVED THE WINTER, WITH PLENTY OF FOOD AND HEATING, YET ONE STARVED TO DEATH WHILE THREE FLED INTO THE NIGHT"**

Having discovered the rangers' trailer, they could easily have survived the winter, with plenty of food and heating for all five men, and yet one starved to death while three fled into the night only to succumb to the cold and be taken by wild animals.

Finally, where is Gary Mathias? He must have made it up to the trailer as he left his trainers before disappearing. Presumably, he took Ted's boots after his friend passed away, and therefore it was most likely he who carefully wrapped Ted's body in the sheets. But Ted lingered for some months so Gary must have been there too. If the food had remained untouched, he must have been equally starving.

Police considered various theories. Most believe that Gary's body is somewhere up in the mountains, swept away by melting snow or dragged off by foraging

animals. His stepfather continues to search for his glasses. "I didn't think a bear would eat that," he said. Perhaps Gary had an episode after a few nights without his medication. The men would have been afraid and left, staggering out into the snow only to die. Ted's frostbite would have kept him in the trailer, unable to leave. But even this vague theory doesn't explain why they were up there in the first place. Did someone force them up that mountain to die? If so, who and why?

Jack Madruga's mother is convinced there were sinister motives and that her son was "either tricked or threatened". The other parents are equally sceptical that their men merely got confused, and believe that dark forces were at work that night. One thing is for certain, as Undersheriff Jack Beecham has expressed, "This case is bizarre as hell."





# THE CHICAGO TYLENOL MURDERS

On one infamous day in September 1982, Chicago was plunged into a state of panic when seven unsuspecting victims died after taking painkillers laced with cyanide. The killer has never been caught...

WRITTEN BY NEIL MITCHELL

**W**ednesday 29 September 1982 is a day etched into the history of Chicago and the state of Illinois for all the wrong reasons. With *Survivor's Eye Of The Tiger* topping the charts, the NFL on hiatus due to a union-led strike and *Cheers* making its debut on NBC-TV, what would otherwise have been an average midweek day in the Windy City and surrounding metropolitan area ended in mass murder, panic and widespread disbelief. Seven random victims were to die of cyanide poisoning after ingesting capsules of Extra-Strength Tylenol that had been deliberately tainted with the lethal substance. In an act of chilling cruelty, some anonymous figure had apparently placed contaminated bottles of the popular, over-the-counter painkiller onto the shelves of numerous stores across the metropolitan district. Unbeknownst to the local

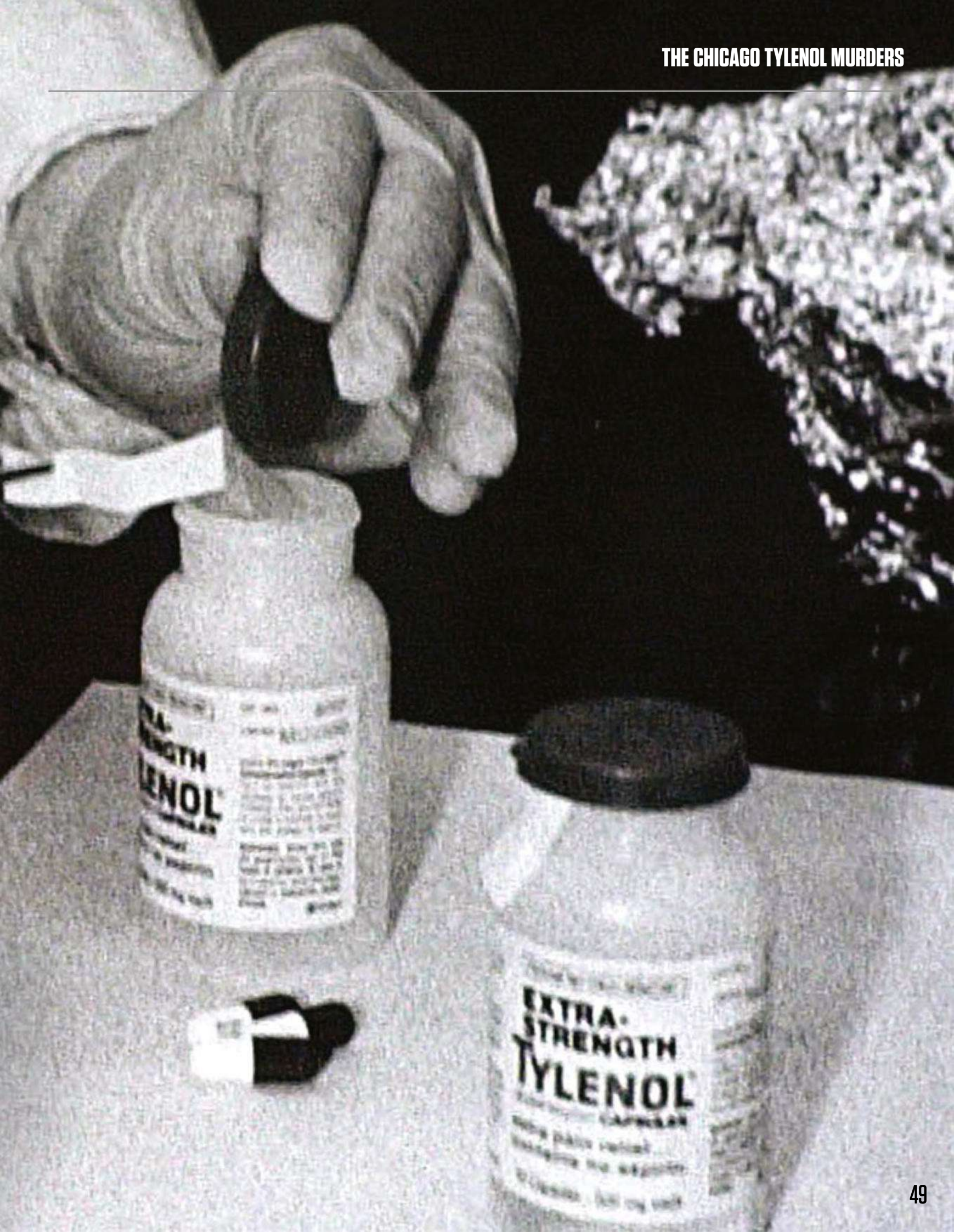
population, they had been entered into a game of Russian roulette with pills instead of bullets. In the days before social media and rolling 24-hour news it took time for the individual authorities involved with each case to ascertain what was causing people to drop dead and then connect the dots to paint a fuller, more horrifying picture as to what had occurred on that now notorious Autumn day.

## WHY COMMIT SUCH A CRIME?

Unsurprisingly, the majority of mass murderers are subsequently found to have harboured long-standing grudges, suffer mental health problems and/or snap under the pressures of whatever personal circumstances push them over the edge. In the case of what became known as the Chicago Tylenol Murders, all of these possibilities could be true but none have been proven as

no one has ever been convicted of the killings. Catching a murderer (or murderers) with no apparent motive, whose victims were decided by an unfortunate roll of the dice and who left no physical evidence (other than the tainted bottles of painkillers) or DNA across multiple murder scenes, has frustrated the local police departments and the FBI for over 30 years. Despite a number of suspects and a conviction for extortion in relation to the killings, the Chicago Tylenol Murders remain an unsolved case. Somewhere out there, barring their own demise, is the person (or persons) responsible for plunging Chicago into a state of collective crisis that quickly spread throughout the nation and had far-reaching ramifications for the pharmaceutical industry. Though the 'who' and the 'why' lie at the heart of the case, the fruitless investigation into the killings and involvement







## A CRIME SCENE DICTATED BY CHANCE

Early into the investigation, a suspected 'placement route' of the murderer was drawn up by detectives



### VICTIM MARY MCFARLAND

Having bought Tylenol from a store located in a mall, McFarland returned to work at the telephone centre in Lombard. Later that afternoon, the 30-year-old's brother, Jack, watched in horror as McFarland collapsed in the office where they both worked.



30 SEPTEMBER 1982



### CLUE UNKNOWN

Suspecting the killer had moved from one retail outlet to the next in a single day, several routes were drawn up, pinpointing five locations and the likely path taken between them. The precise final outlet is unknown, though it was thought to be east of Franks Finer Foods.

29 SEPTEMBER 1982



### CLUE THE REGULAR TYLENOL PURCHASE

The 'smoking gun' purchase of Regular Tylenol by Mary Reiner took place at Frank's Finer Foods, located at ON040, Winfield Road, Winfield. Only Extra-Strength Tylenol Capsules were laced with cyanide.



### VICTIMS

#### ADAM, STANLEY AND THERESA JANUS

Adam Janus' purchase of Extra-Strength Tylenol from a store in Arlington Heights to combat a cold signed not only his own death warrant, but his brother and sister-in-law's, a day later.



29 SEPTEMBER 1982

1 OCTOBER 1982



### VICTIM

#### MARY 'LYNN' REINER

Witness to her mother's death, then eight-year-old Michelle Rosen remembers to this day the sound of Mary Reiner's laboured breathing. Watching her mother shaking and then collapsing is an image Michelle has never forgotten.



### VICTIM MARY KELLERMAN

A 7th grader at Schaumburg's Jane Addams Junior High School, Mary Kellerman complained that morning of a sore throat. She ended the day on a mortuary slab, killed by Tylenol innocently purchased at Elk Grove Village.



### VICTIM PAULA JEAN PRINCE

The only video footage of one of the victims purchasing Tylenol involved Paula Jean Prince. Captured on camera at the Walgreens drug store situated at 1601 N. Wells, Chicago, Prince would be the killer's last victim.



1 OCTOBER 1982



of powerful corporations into the crimes' representation in the media add compelling layers of intrigue into what was already a disturbingly fascinating case. Were the Chicago Tylenol Murders an act of domestic terrorism or the actions of a lone madman with an axe to grind against the state of Illinois? Was it a disgruntled employee or former employee of Johnson & Johnson, the parent company of the Tylenol brand? This possibility has, to this day, been the least explored line of enquiry, prompting recent allegations of a cover-up between the FBI and Johnson & Johnson to absolve the pharmaceutical giant of financial liability for the killings.

## THE FIRST VICTIM

At 6.30am on the morning of the 29th in Elk Grove Village, situated in northeast Illinois adjacent to O'Hare International Airport and

Chicago, 12-year-old Mary Kellerman awoke feeling ill. Her parents decided to keep the young girl off school and Mary took some Extra-Strength Tylenol to help with her ailments. In an interview given to *Chicago* magazine in 2012 on the 30th anniversary of the killings, Mary's father Dennis stated

that 'I heard her go into the bathroom. I heard the door close. Then I heard something drop.' After asking if she was OK but getting no reply from Mary, Dennis opened the bathroom door and found his daughter unconscious on the floor. Unable to rouse Mary, the Kellermans called 911 and requested medical assistance. Having arrived at the scene, Paramedic Dave Spung tried a number of drugs to try and bring Mary back to consciousness but nothing worked.

The stricken girl was transferred into the back of an ambulance and rushed to the nearby Alexian Brothers Medical Center. To the horror of Mary's parents, and despite the best efforts of doctors and medical staff, the young girl was pronounced dead at 9.56am. Edmund Donoghue, the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner for Cook County noted that Mary's body was called in for an autopsy because of her age and the circumstances of her death, though no hint of foul play was considered. This traumatic and devastating experience for the Kellermans would have been tragic enough in isolation; the rapid, unexplained death of a child being nothing any parent should ever have to experience. By the end of the day, however, Mary Kellerman would be known across the nation as the first of seven victims in a shocking crime that would bring together five families under the most bizarrely horrific of circumstances.

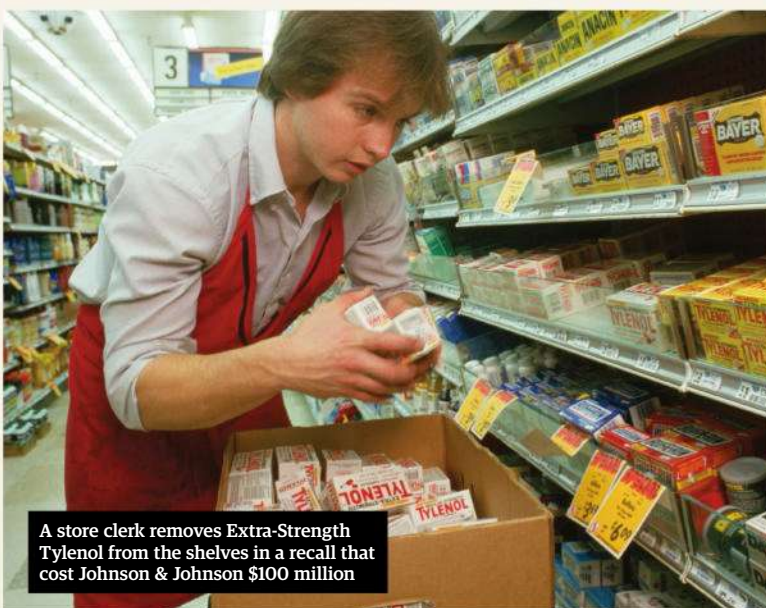
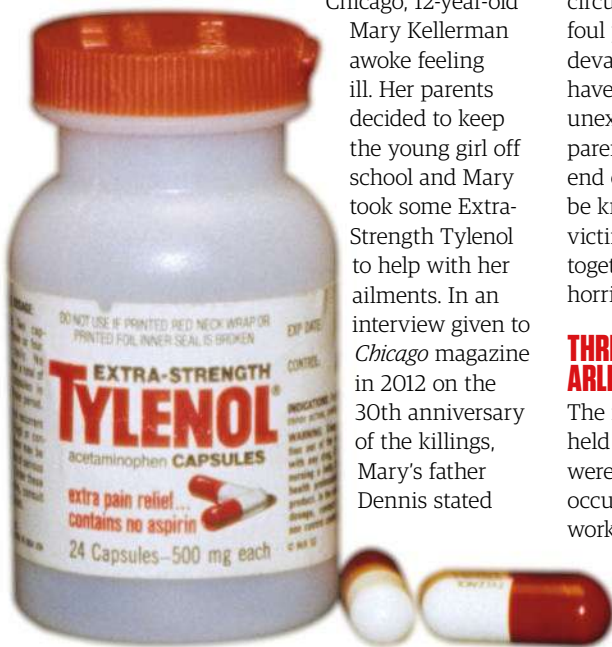
## THREE DEATHS TAKE PLACE IN ARLINGTON HEIGHTS

The next victims of the anonymous killer also held the key to uncovering the crime, such were the strange circumstances in which they occurred. Adam Janus, a 27-year-old postal worker from the northwestern Chicago suburb of Arlington Heights, had taken a day off from work after feeling the beginnings of a cold. After picking his kids up from

## "TO THE HORROR OF MARY'S PARENTS, AND DESPITE THE BEST EFFORTS OF MEDICAL STAFF, THE YOUNG GIRL WAS PRONOUNCED DEAD"

nursery, Janus stopped and bought a bottle of Tylenol Extra-Strength capsules. Having returned home and eaten lunch with his children, he took a couple of the painkillers and within two minutes was lying unconscious on the kitchen floor. Rushed to the Northwest Community Hospital, Janus died early in the afternoon and his death was initially attributed to cardiac arrest by Doctor Thomas Kim, the medical director of the hospital's intensive care unit. Janus' parents, distraught wife Teresa and other close relatives returned to the house in Arlington Heights in a state of shock.

The already distressing afternoon would take an even more tragic turn at around 5pm as the grieving family members were discussing plans for Janus' funeral. His younger brother, Stanley, and Stanley's 19-year old wife, also called Theresa, took some Tylenol capsules for a bad back and a headache respectively. Within minutes, both had collapsed. Eight medical staff fought in vain to rouse Stanley and Theresa from unconsciousness. With their suspicions now raised, Dr Kim, Nurse Helen Jensen, who had been on duty at the time of Janus' admittance, Deputy Medical Examiner Donoghue and several members of the Arlington Heights Fire Department began to try and work out what linked the three mysterious deaths.



A store clerk removes Extra-Strength Tylenol from the shelves in a recall that cost Johnson & Johnson \$100 million



It took the killer just ten minutes to lace each pot of Tylenol with a deadly dose





### THREE DEATHS TAKE PLACE IN THREE MORE VICTIMS SUCCUMB

At around the time the Janus family returned to the doomed house in Arlington Heights, Mary 'Lynn' Reiner from Winfield, DuPage County Illinois, innocently took some Extra-Strength Tylenol. The 27-year-old mother had given birth to her fourth child less than a week before and was feeling under the weather, but fate was to rob Mary of her life and her family of its wife and mother. Arriving home and finding his wife collapsed on the floor, Ed Reiner immediately called for an ambulance and Mary was taken to Central DuPage Hospital, where she was pronounced dead at 9.30am the next day.

Mary's use of Extra-Strength Tylenol would become something of a 'smoking gun' in the investigations as she was prescribed them at Central DuPage Hospital rather than purchasing them at a store. To further complicate matters involving the Reiners, a devastated Ed was the first person brought in by detectives investigating the killings under a theory regarding the crimes that was later discounted.

At around 6.30pm that evening in Lombard, also in DuPage County, Mary McFarland told fellow staff members at the Bell Store where she was employed that she had a bad headache. Her brother and co-worker Jack Eliason recalled that Mary went into a back room to take some Tylenol and, just like the other victims, collapsed shortly after doing so. John Millner, the Commander of detectives at the police department in Elmhurst (the suburb where Mary lived) suspected that she

**“EACH CONTAMINATED CAPSULE OF TYLENOL CONTAINED 65MG OF CYANIDE – BETWEEN 100 AND 1,000 TIMES THE DOSE REQUIRED TO KILL SOMEONE”**

## THE INVESTIGATION

With little in the way of evidence to go on, authorities try to identify a suspect

By Monday 4 October 1982 the cyanide poisoning murders were international news, and the Chicago City Council passed a motion requiring tamper-proof packaging on all drugs to be sold in stores. Subsequently taken up nationwide in the 'Tylenol Bill', the tamper-proof bottles and seals we take for granted nowadays were the direct result of the fallout from the Chicago Tylenol Murders. Johnson & Johnson, though initially reluctant, recalled 31 million bottles of Tylenol from shelves across America at a cost to the company of over \$100 million. While these measures were implemented to protect and reassure the public, they also pointed to the very real possibility that the tampering of the bottles occurred somewhere in Johnson & Johnson's production line. This possibly business-ending theory was, however, swiftly and somewhat dubiously discredited by

both the pharmaceutical company and the FBI. Eventually, eight tainted bottles containing 50 cyanide-laced capsules were recovered from five stores around the Chicago metropolitan area. The amount of contaminated bottles may have been much higher but the true figure will never be known, as citizens were advised to dispose of any Extra-Strength Tylenol they had in their homes. The story pushed in the media was that a 'lone madman' was responsible for the murders; carrying out his (or her) sick deed by purchasing bottles of Extra-Strength Tylenol, lacing them with cyanide elsewhere and then travelling around the metropolitan Chicago region and slipping the now lethal painkillers back onto the shelves of stores picked at random.

Over 100 officers from the law enforcement departments in Chicago and DuPage and Cook



The fraudster quickly backed down and denied any involvement when the law finally tracked him down



had been poisoned but could have had no idea of just how accurate his theory would prove to be.

The final unfortunate victim to be dragged into the killer's twisted plans was United Airlines flight attendant Paula Prince. Arriving into O'Hare Airport on a flight from Las Vegas, Prince visited a Walgreens store and purchased another bottle of Tylenol that had been laced with cyanide. After missing a dinner date with her sister and failing to show up for work on Friday 1 October, Prince's body was discovered in her Old Town apartment.

## A CRIME UNCOVERED...

Throughout the day, off-duty Fire Department Lieutenant Phil Cappitelli and Fire Investigator Richard Keyworth had been listening to the messages relayed across the airwaves around Illinois, and they both noticed that Tylenol was mentioned in the spate of unusual deaths reported. Once Nurse Jensen had been informed of their hunch, she recovered the Extra-Strength pills from the Janus household and it was submitted for testing. The results were shocking: each contaminated capsule of Tylenol contained 65mg of cyanide - between 100 and 1,000 times the dose required to kill someone. The various police departments worked together with medical staff to quickly establish that they and metropolitan Chicago faced a nightmare scenario; all the mysterious deaths were connected and a major crime of mass murder had been committed. The investigations into the killings, code-named TYMURS by the FBI, began in earnest, as fears further deaths may happen were foremost in the minds of the authorities.

Johnson & Johnson  
Parent of  
McNeil laboratories

*Gentlemen,*

*As you can see, it is easy to place cyanide (both potassium & sodium) into capsules sitting on store shelves. And since the cyanide is inside the gelatin, it is easy to get buyers to swallow the bitter pill. Another beauty is that cyanide operates quickly. It takes so very little. And there will be no time to take counter measures.*

*If you don't mind the publicity of these little capsules, then do nothing. So far, I have spent less than fifty dollars and it takes me less than 10-minutes per bottle.*

*If you want to stop the killing then wire \$1,000,000.00 to bank account # 84-49-597 at Continental Illinois bank Chicago, Ill.*

*Don't attempt to involve the FBI or local Chicago authorities with this letter. A couple of phone calls by me will undo anything you can possibly do.*

James Lewis' letter was no hoax, but would he have carried out his implied threat?

counties worked together with the FBI and the Illinois Attorney General, Tyrone Fahner, to try and crack the disturbing case.

More than a thousand potential leads were investigated - from prank callers claiming responsibility to terminated former employees of Johnson & Johnson - but nothing was sticking and no firm evidence was forthcoming. Ed Reiner was brought in for questioning after it was posited that he may have poisoned his wife, for reasons unclear, and enlisted the help of friends to distribute tainted Tylenol around the region in an effort to disguise the individual crime by making it just one of many. This outlandish theory was soon discarded, and years later the investigative team claimed Ed was never really a firm suspect in a move that highlights just how much straw clutching was involved in hunting down the perpetrator with so few tangible clues available.

The first solid breakthrough came on Wednesday 6 October, just over a week after the

first tragic Tylenol murder, when an extortion letter arrived at the offices of Johnson & Johnson demanding \$1 million to stop the Tylenol killings. The investigative team focused on uncovering who was behind the letter and eventually it was traced to James William Lewis, a New York City resident with work ties in Chicago. Arrested in December of 1982, Lewis' handwriting was matched with the letter and one sent to the White House threatening to bomb it and continue the poisonings. A con man with a troubled past, Lewis was convicted of extortion and credit card fraud and sentenced to 20 years in jail. Frustratingly for the law enforcement agencies, no direct links to the Tylenol killings have ever emerged, with Lewis himself resolutely stating that he didn't commit the crimes. As Richard Brzeczek, the Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department at the time, later stated: "It wasn't James Lewis. James Lewis was an asshole, an opportunist".

With Lewis behind bars but more than likely not responsible for the Tylenol murders, the efforts to find the actual killer(s) continued as a number of other suspects were considered at different times. Firstly, Chicago resident Roger Arnold would be accused, investigated and cleared early in 1983, with his story taking a dramatic, fatal turn later that year. In May 1988, Laurie Dann, from Winnetka, Illinois, embarked on a shooting rampage that ended with Dann taking her own life after holding a family hostage. A person with a history of mental illness and poisoning attempts, Dann was considered as a potential suspect in the Tylenol murders, though no link was ever found. Perhaps the most eye-catching suspect put forward is Ted Kaczynski, the 'Unabomber'. Kaczynski's first four crimes took place in Chicago and his parents lived there during the poisonings in 1982. As with the other suspects, however, no firm link has ever connected Kaczynski to the Tylenol murders.



# THE WHISTLE-BLOWER AND THE SMOKING GUN

A former Johnson & Johnson employee and a victim's daughter speaks out...

On 23 September 2011, six days shy of the anniversary of the Chicago Tylenol Murders, a book was published that contained damning allegations that the investigation into the crimes was deliberately controlled by Johnson & Johnson with the full cooperation of the FBI. That book, *The Tylenol Mafia: Marketing, Murder and Johnson & Johnson* was written by Scott Bartz, a former employee of a subsidiary company of Johnson & Johnson with many years experience working in the pharmaceutical industry.

After three years of research and the analysis of over 8,000 documents pertaining to the crimes and the investigation, Bartz concluded that the bottles of Extra-Strength Tylenol were almost certainly tampered with somewhere along the distribution and repackaging supply chain - not at the store, pharmacy, or hospital. The author also concluded that Johnson & Johnson, fearing financial liability and a huge blow to their reputation, took every measure possible to steer the investigation and media reports away from looking into this possibility.

Rather than actively trying to solve the case, Bartz also attests that the authorities colluded with Johnson & Johnson to perpetuate the 'lone madman' theory in the media, knowing full well that the real Tylenol killer most likely came from within the ranks of the giant pharmaceutical

company itself. That he was helped during the research stage by Michelle Rosen, the daughter of Mary 'Lynn' Reiner, points to a sense of distrust among the victims' families regarding the official narrative perpetuated by the FBI and Johnson & Johnson.

The 'smoking gun' in the 'lone madman' theory that has dominated the investigation for nearly 40 years is Mary 'Lynn' Reiner and her use of Extra-Strength Tylenol. Reiner was discharged from Central DuPage Hospital one day prior to the killings after recently giving birth. Reiner was prescribed a 'unit-dose package' of eight Extra-Strength Tylenol capsules from the hospital pharmacy. On the day that she died, Reiner had purchased a bottle of regular Tylenol from a local store that, on inspection after her death, contained six Extra-Strength capsules. Reiner was found to have taken two Extra-Strength Tylenol, the maths adds up and suggests Reiner had dropped the lethal capsules into the regular bottle of Tylenol for safekeeping. Crucially, it discredits the official line that someone went store-to-store planting the lethal bottles for the public to purchase. No 'lone madman' could have gotten access to a closed store pharmacy within a hospital; only someone working within the distribution and repackaging supply chain would have been able to lace the Extra-Strength Tylenol that killed Mary 'Lynn'

Reiner. Michelle Rosen - eight years old at the time of her mother's death and therefore too young to sign the gag order Johnson & Johnson had the victims' families sign - has called the FBI's handling of the case "irresponsible, disturbing, stressful and odd", attesting that the investigation was virtually dead until wind of Bartz's then forthcoming exposé reached the offices of Johnson & Johnson and the authorities. Suddenly, the case was news again and the FBI would re-activate their efforts to find the killer, but only by focusing on James William Lewis, Ted Kaczynski and the phantom 'lone madman'.

A cover-up was entirely possible, as the CEO of Johnson & Johnson at the time of the killings was one James Burke, who counted FDA chief Arthur Hayes and the head of the FBI, William Webster, among his personal friends. Additionally, Burke's brother was a powerful player in the media, with controlling stakes in a number of TV networks and newspapers. In a clear conflict of interest, representatives of Johnson & Johnson worked closely with the FBI from day one, and the company was allowed to test the recalled Tylenol themselves. Only one per cent of the recalled capsules were ever tested, and the rest were destroyed. The only response Johnson & Johnson have ever given in relation to Bartz's exposé has been a blanket 'no comment'.

## WHO ARE THE PRIME SUSPECTS?

The case remains unsolved, but the evidence points to a few potential suspects



### TED KACZYNSKI

A convicted serial killer known as The Unabomber, the imprisoned Theodore Kaczynski volunteered a DNA sample to the FBI in 2011, after he was linked to the Tylenol poisonings due to his connections to Chicago. Results proved that he was not the culprit. Kaczynski had denied ever being in possession of potassium cyanide.

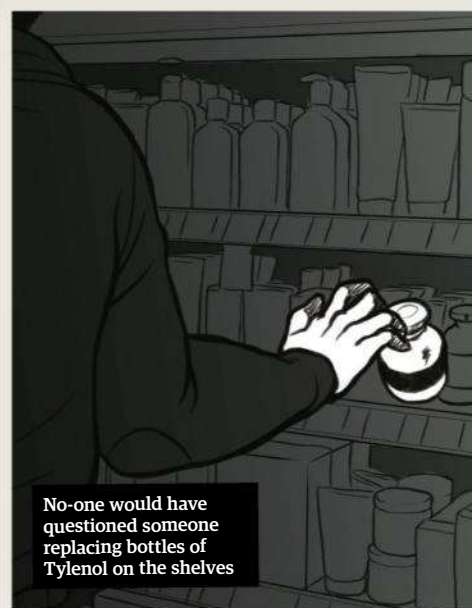


### JOHNSON & JOHNSON

In his 2011 book, Scott Bartz, a former Johnson & Johnson employee, points the finger of blame at the manufacturers. This is a claim Johnson & Johnson have systematically denied ever since the murders first happened and the recall of the product was effective.

### JAMES WILLIAM LEWIS

Investigators traced a threatening letter back to a troubled con man with a shady past. Lewis had written a letter to Johnson & Johnson demanding \$1 million in order to stop the murders. He denied that he was behind the crime and that the letter was a hoax, but was later convicted of extortion. Police could not link him to the poisonings.







A laboratory at Chicago's Board of Health went into overdrive, testing batches of Tylenol

## THE AFTERMATH

**Almost 40 years later, what hope is there of finally catching the Tylenol murderer?**

At the time of writing, no one has been charged and convicted with the Chicago Tylenol Murders, and there's no imminent chance of that changing. Johnson & Johnson's \$100,000 reward remains unclaimed and in 2013, the FBI formally stood down from leading the investigation. These 'perfect' murders occurred at a time when drug packaging was rudimentary, financial transactions were largely cash based and surveillance technology was only just becoming a regular sight in our shops. None of the stores that did have security cameras in operation at the time turned up any footage of a 'lone madman' acting suspiciously around the shelves where pharmaceuticals were stocked. No physical evidence linking anyone to the murders has ever been uncovered, and Bartz's distribution line theory, covered in his book *The Tylenol Mafia: Marketing, Murder and Johnson & Johnson*, has yet to be followed up on by either Johnson & Johnson, or the FBI.

While Ed Reiner and Roger Arnold are names no longer mentioned by investigators when discussing the possible identity of the Tylenol murderer, James William Lewis and Unabomber Ted Kaczynski have both come back into the frame in recent years. In 2009, the home of Lewis and his wife was searched and boxes, files and a computer were seized. Lewis and his wife provided DNA samples to authorities and the convicted extortionist repeated his denial of being the Tylenol murderer. Similarly, Kaczynski voluntarily submitted a DNA sample in 2011 after the FBI once again raised the possibility that the Unabomber may have been behind the killings. No charges have been forthcoming and the FBI stated they simply wanted to rule him out once and for all. Whether both were targeted again as a diversionary tactic to deflect attention away from Bartz's distribution line theory remains to be seen.

With the case now jointly headed by the local police departments where the killings occurred, Arlington Heights Police Commander, Mike Hernandez, stated in 2013 that "the investigation is on-going, and it continues to be active". With the possibility that the tampering may well have taken place somewhere in the distribution and repackaging line it will be interesting to see if the authorities ever follow this line of enquiry.



On the morning of 29 September, Mary Kellerman went into her bathroom, but never left alive



# MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

**96** THE DISAPPEARANCE  
OF ANDREW GOSDEN



**64** THE DISAPPEARING  
SKYJACKER



**88** RUN FOR  
YOUR LIFE







Geddy Images

Geddy Images



# VANISHED INTO THIN AIR

The bizarre disappearances of various famous individuals have instigated numerous conspiracy theories, but will we ever find out what really happened to these lost souls?

WRITTEN BY JOANNA ELPHICK

**L**osing a loved one is always a painful experience, but after the funeral grieving friends and family can slowly begin to rebuild their lives and move on. Sadly, when someone simply disappears never to be seen again, the desperate spark of hope that they will someday return stunts the healing process, denying that all-important sense of closure. Not even the greatest of magicians can really vanish into thin air, so where did these poor souls go? A lack of concrete answers inevitably leads to half-truths, hearsay and supposition, all wrapped up in a tantalising shroud of mystery... and none more so than the suspicious case of Lord Lucan.

## DISAPPEARANCE 01

### RICHARD BINGHAM 7<sup>TH</sup> EARL OF LUCAN

Date went missing  
8 November 1974

The Earl of Lucan, known to his aristocratic chums as 'Lucky Lucan', had been rather less fortunate than usual in the months leading up to his mysterious disappearance. An obsessive gambler, he had recently lost his winning streak and was now living off his overdraft. His family life had also unravelled. His wife, Veronica, had forced him out of the family home two years earlier, claiming domestic abuse. Such allegations were almost certainly true since the former member of the Coldstream Guards had a reputation for violence and an explosive temper.

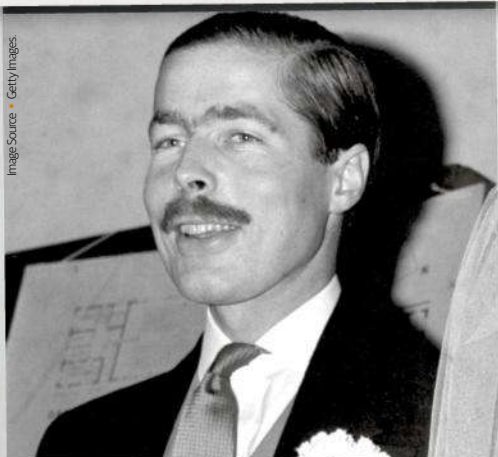
Veronica had recently won a battle against her estranged husband, who had been fighting to retain control of their three children. Lucan had been devastated as the judge handed sole custody to the woman he had grown to hate.

Despite the legal bills and mounting household expenses, Lucan chose to forget his sorrows at the Clermont

Club, an exclusive, members-only gambling club in Mayfair, owned by his friend John Aspinall.

Veronica had continued to live at the family home in Lower Belgrave Street with her children and the nanny, Sandra Rivett. On the night of 7 November, Sandra shouldn't have been there since it was usually her night off but, unfortunately for her, she'd swapped it that week in order to help out.

At 8.40pm, Sandra offered to make some tea and bring it up. When she didn't return, Lady Lucan decided to investigate the holdup, venturing down to the kitchens, only



THE DASHING YOUNG ARISTOCRAT  
AND ALLEGED MURDERER





to be jumped upon and beaten repeatedly with a lead pipe. She recognised the assailant's voice as that of her husband. Fighting for her life, Lady Lucan grabbed his testicles and squeezed. Lord Lucan seemed to calm down and went to get a cloth to clean his wife's face, leaving Veronica a window of opportunity to escape.

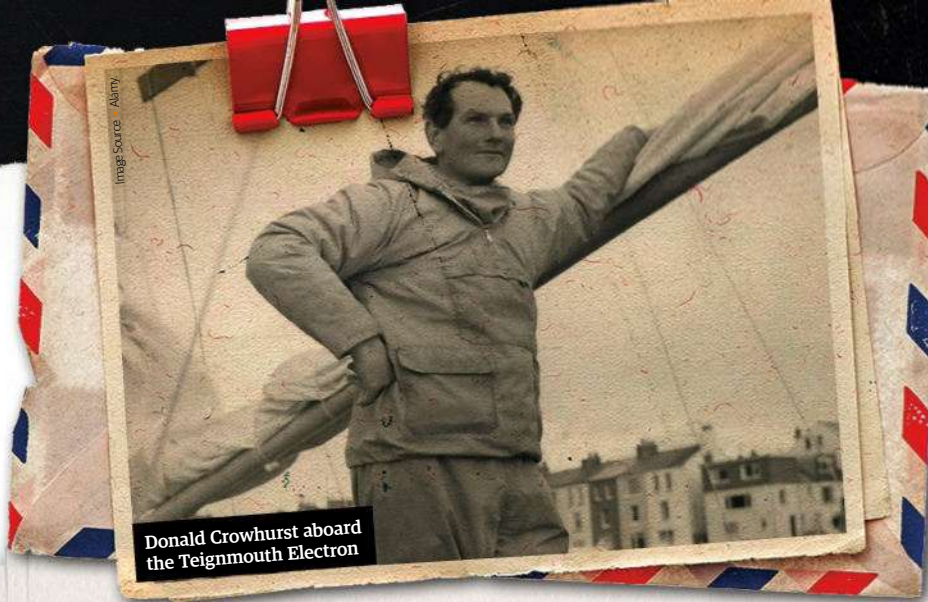
At 9.45pm she burst into the nearby Plumbers Arms pub, screaming for help. When the police arrived, Sandra Rivett's body was discovered in the basement, wrapped in a canvas mail bag. Lucan had almost certainly mistaken Sandra for his wife and bludgeoned her to death.

Lucan was seen one last time, having shown up at his friends' house 42 miles away in Uckfield. Susan Maxwell-Scott listened to his fanciful story of an unknown assailant attacking his wife and the nanny, which he'd witnessed through the window. He claimed he'd gone in to help and interrupted the attack, but Veronica had screamed that Lucan had paid someone to kill her, so he fled. He telephoned his mother just after midnight, asking her to collect the children, and left, promising to "sort things out". He was never seen again.

So where did he go? Some claim he drowned himself in the Newhaven Harbour through sheer guilt at killing Rivett. His car had been found abandoned nearby. In 2012, Shirley Robey, who worked for Lucan's close friend John Aspinall, claimed to have overheard a conversation between his friends, stating that he had escaped to Africa. Veronica was extremely sceptical of this suggestion, since he liked his creature comforts and had a dislike for foreign places. Aspinall owned a zoo, which many believe was Lucan's final resting place. Lucan knew that, without proof of death, probate could not be granted for a minimum of seven years, meaning his children would be old enough to deal with their own

estate affairs and his wife would lose all control. Clermont Club regulars believe that he shot himself at the zoo and had his body fed to the tigers. It is a gruesome tale but one that might just be true.

Aspinall's mother apparently told police at the time, "Last I heard of him, he was being fed to the tigers at my son's zoo." Either way, 'Lucky Lucan' hasn't been seen for 45 years.



## DISAPPEARANCE 02

# DONALD CHARLES ALFRED CROWHURST

Date went missing  
29 June 1969

Donald Crowhurst was little more than a weekend sailor whose reckless decision to compete in the Sunday Times Golden Globe Race - a non-stop, single-handed, round-the-world yacht race - was destined to end in tragedy. Sadly, the £5,000 cash prize was too great a temptation for a man facing financial ruin and so, with little regard for the devastating impact it would have on his wife and children, he set off on 31 October 1968.

Things began to go wrong almost immediately since the 40-foot trimaran, the Teignmouth Electron, was an inappropriate choice for such a dangerous voyage. Lack of time and a general slapdash approach meant that he had set off without completing any of his safety devices and had been too busy giving interviews to the press to pack many of his supplies.

By December, he had realised that he was way out of his depth but dared not quit the race, knowing that this would lead to enormous humiliation and financial ruin. He chose instead

to cheat, shutting down his radio and planning to wait in the South Atlantic until the other sailors began the final leg. He would simply falsify the navigation logbook and join them on the return journey to England.

Back at home, his vague, sporadic radio reports led people to believe that he was winning, particularly since some other competitors had dropped out, but Crowhurst was, in fact, confused, lost and panicking.

The last radio contact was made on 29 June and the final entry in the log book was dated 1 July. Nine days later, the Teignmouth Electron was discovered drifting in the Atlantic Ocean. Donald Crowhurst had simply disappeared.

The log books depicted a man in absolute torment, wracked with guilt from his own subterfuge and terrified of discovery. If he had won the race, experts would have spotted his false entries and the cash prize would have been withdrawn, leaving him humiliated and his family in financial distress. Philosophical ramblings and bizarre poems show his steady descent into madness. Whether he jumped into the icy waters of his own volition or was knocked overboard by a rogue wave can never be established. The state of the boat suggests he took his own life in a desperate attempt to avoid facing what awaited him on dry land.

The winning sailor, Robin Knox-Johnston, donated his prize money to Crowhurst's widow, Clare, and his four children, who were left to face the press and deal with the financial burden alone.

The trimaran is hoisted aboard the Picardy after it was discovered drifting, unmanned, in the Atlantic



Donald proudly poses with the family he left behind: wife Clare and children Rachel, Simon, Roger and James





## DISAPPEARANCE 03

# MAJOR GLENN MILLER

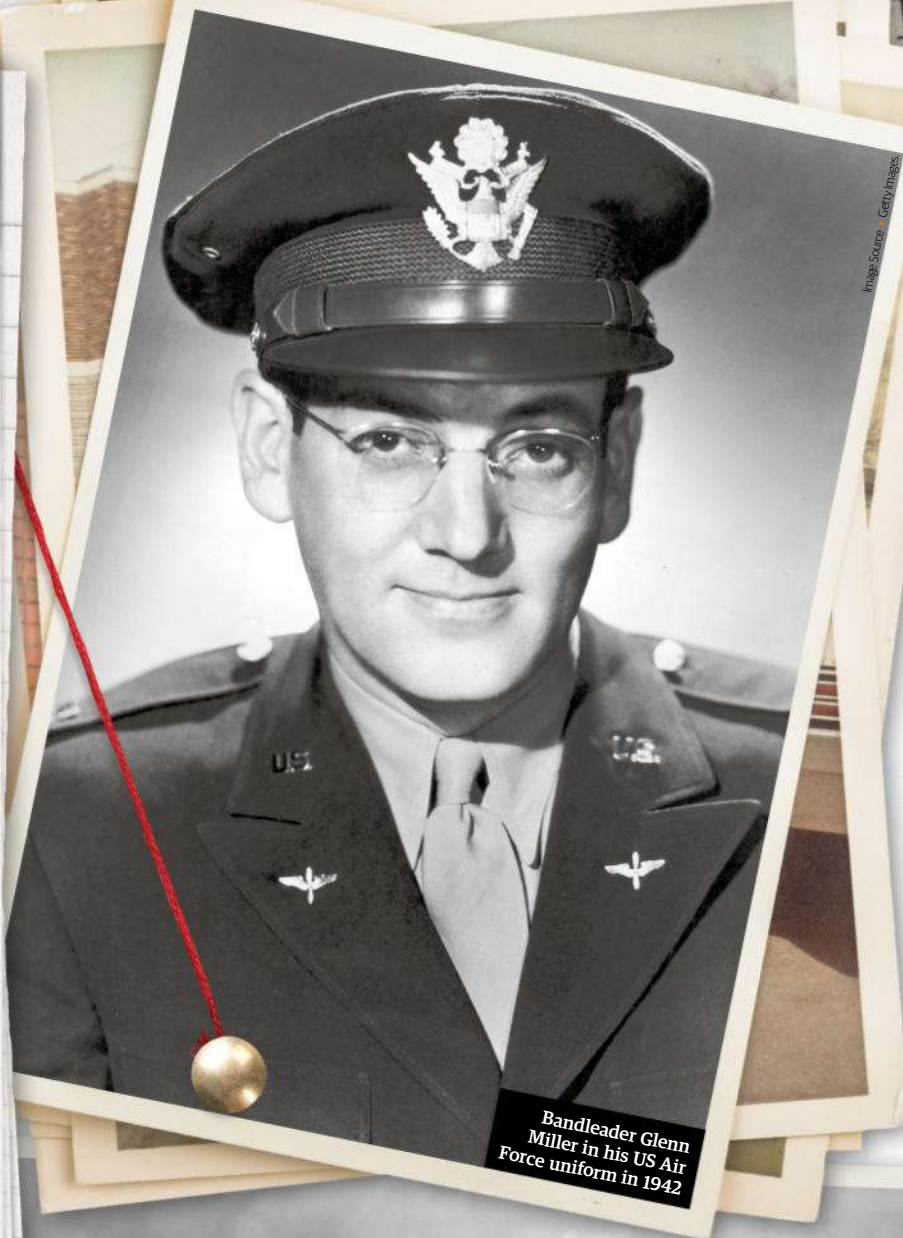
Date went missing  
15 December 1944

Towards the end of World War II, a single-engine Noorduyt Norseman aircraft left England, bound for Paris. Onboard were two Air Force officers and the bandleader Glenn Miller, who was heading to France to organise a concert for the troops. But, somewhere over the Channel, the plane vanished.

There had been no distress signal and no wreckage recovered, so a satisfactory conclusion to the mystery seemed highly unlikely. However, two theories have claimed to hold the answer.

On that fateful day, a formation of Lancaster bombers returning from an aborted raid on Germany had been ordered to jettison their bombs over the Channel before landing. One navigator claimed that a Noorduyt Norseman plane had been accidentally hit during the procedure. Was this the aircraft carrying Miller?

This seemed to be the likely explanation, until the notebooks of a plane spotter appeared on TV show *The Antiques Roadshow*. Richard Anderton was 17 when he spotted Miller's plane overhead in Reading, proving it took a major diversion on its way to Paris, and making it impossible for the plane to have been in the bomb jettison zone. It's now believed the plane was flying low due to poor visibility, and crashed when its fuel lines froze.



Bandleader Glenn Miller in his US Air Force uniform in 1942



A Noorduyt Norseman, similar to the plane transporting Miller on his last flight





Mrs. Agatha Christie as she was last seen (centre), and (on left and right) as she was seen in disguise.

Did Christie use a series of disguises to disappear from the public gaze? The Daily News certainly thought so

A young and highly successful Agatha Christie

## DISAPPEARANCE 04

# AGATHA CHRISTIE

Date went missing  
3-14 December 1926

On a cold evening in early December, during the height of her fame, writer Agatha Christie kissed her daughter goodnight, walked out of her Berkshire home and drove off into the night, only to disappear in a puff of exhaust smoke. For 11 days, the police and public searched in vain until, just as suddenly, she reappeared.

The disappearance instigated one of the largest manhunts ever, involving more than 1,000 police officers, bloodhounds, aeroplanes and hundreds of volunteers. Her car was found partly covered in bushes near Guildford, abandoned by a spring. The car offered up little information except that she had left her fur coat and driver's licence behind, and the headlights were still on.

Home Secretary William Joynson-Hicks called upon Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and fellow crime writer Dorothy L Sayers to help who, in turn, brought in mediums, but to no avail. However, on 14 December, a musician working in the Old Swan Hotel, Harrogate, called the police, claiming to have spotted Agatha dancing in the ballroom. The lady of mystery had been found.

But why did she do it? Although a few cynics believed at the time that this was a wild publicity stunt for her latest book, it is most commonly thought that she was suffering from psychogenic amnesia following the recent death of her beloved mother and the discovery that her husband, Archie, had been having an affair with a secretary, Nancy Neele. Her overwhelming grief had inadvertently placed her at the centre of her very own mystery.



**"A FEW CYNICS  
BELIEVED AT THE  
TIME THAT THIS WAS  
A WILD PUBLICITY  
STUNT FOR HER  
LATEST BOOK"**

Image Source • Public Domain, Daily Herald (London) 15 December 1926, p. 1

## CHRISTIE FOUND HARROGATE

Re-union With Husband  
Famous Hydro.

**"MEMORY GONE"**

Novelist Spent Time While  
and Public Looked for Her

the missing inventor of detective stories, was  
t to the Hydro, Harrogate, by her husband,  
few after a dramatic meeting between the pair,  
told the DAILY HERALD that his wife had suffered  
complete loss of memory." She did not even  
e added.

**"She does not  
know why she  
is here."**  
—Col. Christie



Col. Christie



Public Domain





FBI agents search for the remains of Hoffa in Michigan after receiving a tip from former mobster Tony Zerilli in 2003

**"IT WAS THOUGHT  
HOFFA'S CORPSE  
HAD BEEN GROUND  
UP AND THROWN  
INTO THE FLORIDA  
SWAMPS"**

## DISAPPEARANCE 05 **JAMES RIDDLE HOFFA**

Date went missing  
30 July 1975

Jimmy Hoffa was barely out of his teens when he led his first strike, and from this point on he shared his life with mobsters, racketeers, the Mafia and gambling moguls. Through threats of violence, dubious payoffs, kickbacks and sweetheart deals, he rose up through the ranks of America's largest union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, ultimately becoming its president in the 1950s.

President Kennedy's brother, Robert, loathed the union leader, a hatred that led to the formation of the Justice Department's 'Get Hoffa Squad', which attempted to charge him with everything from extortion to jury tampering, resulting in an eight-year sentence. Later that year, he was also convicted of fraud and received a further five years. After endless appeals, he was eventually locked up in 1967. Hoffa intended to run the union from prison through its acting president, Frank Fitzsimmons, but Fitzsimmons solidified his hold on the role. When Hoffa's sentence was commuted and he was released in 1971, he attempted to claw back some of his power, but this proved to be difficult. Despite support from President Nixon, who'd since come into power, Hoffa struggled to regain his former position due to a term of his release from prison, which barred him from holding any union office for ten years. Furious and humiliated, he began conducting business with some dangerous individuals, making numerous enemies as he went.



**JAMES R HOFFA IN 1957, TESTIFYING BEFORE THE  
SENATE RACKETS COMMITTEE IN WASHINGTON, DC**

Was Hoffa gunned down by Frank 'The Irishman' Sheeran in this Detroit house?

On 30 July 1975, Hoffa arranged to have lunch with a group of syndicate thugs, but when they failed to show he phoned his wife at approximately 2.15pm, then waited in his car outside the restaurant. When he didn't come home that night, she called the police. The following day, the car was discovered, unlocked, but Hoffa had vanished.

The FBI were quickly called in and, over the next ten years, 200 G-Men (slang for 'government men') were assigned to Hoffa's disappearance. Everyone was of the opinion that he'd been murdered but no-one could fathom out who had done the deed or where the body had been hidden. Theories were raised and duly filed. At one point it was thought that contract killer Charles Allen had ground up his corpse into little pieces and had it thrown in the Florida swamps. Others claimed he'd been killed by hitman Donald 'Tony The Greek' Frankos and his body buried under the Giants Stadium. In 2004, Hoffa's one-time friend, Frank 'the Irishman' Sheeran, gave a deathbed confession, pointing to a home in the suburbs of Detroit as the murder scene. More than 16,000 pages of reports were written up but whittling down the never-ending list of suspects proved impossible - after all, he'd been an incredibly unpopular individual on both sides of the law.

In 1982, Jimmy Hoffa was declared legally dead but, without a body, we'll never know if he really is.



## DISAPPEARANCE 06

# RAOUL GUSTAF WALLENBERG

Date went missing  
17 January 1945

Raoul Wallenberg's youth set him up for the adventures and high drama he was to face in later life and gave him the skills that he needed to accomplish the outstanding feats of bravery that he would ultimately be remembered for. Born in Sweden in 1912 into a wealthy academic family, young Wallenberg was given an excellent education. He travelled extensively, before returning to Stockholm where he began working for the Central European Trading Company. By 1942, he was its International Director, undertaking frequent trips to Germany, France and Hungary.

During this time, Wallenberg witnessed first-hand the behaviour of the Nazi regime and the atrocities befalling the Hungarian Jews, painfully aware of his own 1/16th Jewish ancestry.

When US President Franklin D Roosevelt created the War Refugee Board to deal with the humanitarian crisis, they began searching for someone who could oversee a rescue mission for the trapped Jews. By June 1944, they had chosen Wallenberg to organise the program - with his intimate knowledge of the area, business contacts and excellent language skills, he was the perfect man for the job.

'Protective passports' (Schutz-Pass) were secretly developed and issued to those Jews most at risk, declaring them to be Swedish, thereby avoiding deportation and the wearing of yellow stars. Safe houses were rented throughout Budapest. Wallenberg had organised and executed an audacious plan that saved up to 100,000 Jewish lives, but it also painted a target on his back.

Wallenberg continually changed locations to avoid apprehension but eventually he was tracked down. On 17 January 1945, he was called to the Soviet's Deputy Commissar for Defence. He was never officially seen again, although it's known that he was transferred to Lubyanka Prison, cell 123.

Various people claimed to have seen him or heard his voice from behind closed doors, but the evidence is little more than hearsay. The Soviet-controlled Hungarian radio declared that he had been murdered in 1945, while, in 1957, the Soviet government claimed that he had died of natural causes in his cell back in 1947. An investigation carried out in 1991 concluded that Wallenberg had been poisoned while under lock and key in the infamous Lubyanka. Contradictory testimony said he had been shot.

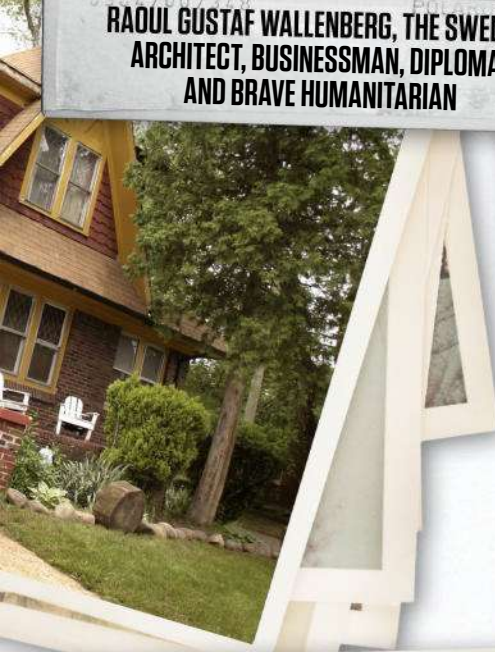
Following Stalin's death in 1953, thousands of prisoners-of-war were released, and witness accounts surfaced, describing encounters with Wallenberg in Moscow prisons; a number of former prisoners have claimed to have seen him long after his supposed death. Talk of a Swedish diplomat living within the walls of a Soviet prison still persist. Two independent witnesses reported seeing him behind bars as recently as 1987.

In October 2016, Raoul Wallenberg was finally declared dead. The Swedish tax agency recorded the date of his passing as 31 July 1952. It's as good a date as any, but whether it's correct... who knows?

**"WALLENBERG'S PLAN  
HAD SAVED UP TO  
100,000 JEWISH LIVES...  
BUT IT ALSO PAINTED A  
TARGET ON HIS BACK"**



RAOUL GUSTAF WALLENBERG, THE SWEDISH  
ARCHITECT, BUSINESSMAN, DIPLOMAT  
AND BRAVE HUMANITARIAN



Did Wallenberg end his days  
locked away behind one  
of these steel cell doors at  
Lubyanka Prison?



Wallenberg's half-sister, Nina  
Lagergren, holds a photograph  
of her beloved brother




# THE DISAPPEARING SKYJACKER

Has 'DB Cooper' eluded the might and manpower of the FBI for more than 40 years, or did he die from a failed parachute jump one night in November 1971?

WRITTEN BY **PAUL DONNELLEY**





The FBI is justifiably proud of its ability to solve crimes. Founded on 26 July 1908, the United States of America's Federal Bureau of Investigation has failed to solve just one case of air piracy - or skyjacking - in its 100 years-plus of history: the infamous case of DB Cooper. On the day before Thanksgiving in 1971, a man calling himself Dan Cooper boarded a Boeing 727-100, Northwest Orient (now Northwest Airlines) Flight 305, at Portland International Airport in Oregon, on the 30-minute trip bound for Seattle, Washington. The flight took off as scheduled at 2.50pm and was about a third full. The man calling himself Dan Cooper settled

into seat 18C, for which he had paid \$18.52 plus tax. He was inconspicuous, if slightly overdressed in a dark suit, a white collared shirt, a black necktie with a mother of pearl tie pin and loafers. He was also carrying a briefcase. Once comfy, he ordered a bourbon and soda and lit a cigarette. Shortly after take off, Cooper motioned to air hostess Florence Schaffner, who was sitting on a jump seat, and, as she approached, he passed her a piece of paper. Assuming that he was trying to slip her his telephone number, she put it into her pocket without looking at it. Cooper then said to her: "Miss, you'd better look at that note. I have a bomb." With trembling hands, Miss

Schaffner unfurled the note, which had the following information written in felt-tip pen in capital letters: "I have a bomb in my briefcase. I will use it if necessary. I want you to sit next to me. You are being hijacked."

Miss Schaffner sat next to Cooper and asked to see the device. Cooper opened his case slightly and she saw wires, a battery and eight red cylinders. She was given his demands. Cooper wanted \$200,000 in "negotiable American currency," four parachutes and for the plane to be refuelled in Seattle. The air hostess took the note to the pilot, William A Scott, with the instructions. When she came back, Cooper was sporting a pair of sunglasses.

The parachuting skyjacker entered popular culture ten years after his disappearance with the 1981 film *The Pursuit of DB Cooper*



## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

### PASSENGER SAFETY

Captain Scott immediately radioed the control tower at Seattle-Tacoma Airport who, in turn, contacted the airline as well as the FBI to inform them of the unfolding situation on board Flight 305. The Bureau asked Northwest Orient what they wanted to do about the situation that was unfolding on one of their planes thousands of feet in the air, and airline president Donald Nyrop told them that keeping their passengers safe was his priority. He agreed to pay the ransom and provide the parachutes and made it clear that all employees were to co-operate fully with the hijacker. In the meantime, Captain Scott made an announcement over the loudspeaker to the effect that there would be a short delay before reaching their destination, because of a minor mechanical fault. The plane circled for two hours over Puget Sound to allow the ransom demands to be met and emergency personnel to be assembled.

The FBI carefully recorded all the notes that came from the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco onto microfilm - 10,000 unmarked \$20 bills - before passing them on. While the authorities were busy on the ground, Cooper relaxed and drank a second bourbon and soda, which he paid for. Another hostess, Tina Mucklow, later commented that the hijacker "seemed rather nice". Florence Schaffner noted that he seemed familiar with the area, pointing out landmarks.

At 5.24pm, Cooper's demands were finally met and 15 minutes later, the plane landed at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. Under Cooper's instructions, Captain Scott taxied the plane to a remote but well-lit area of the runway and all the lights in the cabin were switched off. Al Lee, Northwest Orient's Seattle operations manager, delivered the four parachutes and the money in a rucksack, handing them to Tina Mucklow onboard Flight 305.



### \$200,000 JUMP

Investigators weren't short of evidence for his crime but exactly where DB Cooper landed is still a mystery



### CLUE BANK NOTES

While on holiday on 10 February 1980, eight-year-old Brian Ingram found a bundle of 299 identifiable \$20 notes. He said: "I hit this sort of lump and dug it out. I wasn't excited at all at first, then I brushed the sand off, and it was money." It took six years before he was allowed to keep some of his loot. The federal government kept 14 (some sources say 13) of the tattered bank notes as evidence, and the remaining \$5,700 was split equally between Brian and Northwest's insurance company.

### DEATH DIVE

Retired FBI Agent Ralph Himmelsbach claims that Cooper could not have survived the jump with almost ten kilograms of money strapped to his waist. He is wrong. In the USA, 727s are used by private individuals for commercial skydiving. Indeed, people pay extra to do the Cooper jump.

On 7 April 1972, Richard Floyd McCoy Jr, a Vietnam veteran, skyjacked a United Airlines 727, demanding \$500,000. He jumped from the plane over Provo, Utah at 16,000 feet and travelling at 320 kilometres per hour. He survived, so it seems entirely possible that Cooper - jumping at 6,000 feet below McCoy - could have lived to tell his tale. Unlike Cooper, McCoy was tracked down and brought to justice. He was arrested two days later and sent to prison for 45 years.

**"I HAVE A BOMB IN MY BRIEFCASE. I WILL USE IT IF NECESSARY. SIT NEXT TO ME. YOU ARE BEING HIJACKED"**





## WITNESS CHAT-UP NOTE

Air hostess Florence Schaffner was passed a note by Dan Cooper but she thought he was trying to chat her up and initially ignored it, until he told her that it was a ransom demand and that he had a bomb in his hand luggage.



## CLUE FINGERPRINTS

Dan Cooper sat here when he hijacked the plane. Later, FBI agents discovered 66 unidentified latent fingerprints. However, none matched any on FBI databases and the case remains unsolved although the Bureau is convinced that Cooper perished on his descent.

NORTHWEST

2

## EVENT STAIRS LOWERED

The aft stairs from where Dan Cooper jumped into the unknown were lowered mid-flight for Cooper to jump. After the hijacking, the Federal Aviation Authority ordered that all Boeing 727s be fitted with an apparatus that prevented the aft door being opened while in flight.

1

## EVENT LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

This was the route the aircraft was to take. After he had taken control, DB Cooper pointed out landmarks to the air hostess, Florence Schaffner, which led the FBI to believe that he was a local.

3

## EVENT FLIGHT PLAN

The journey aboard Northwest Flight 305 from Portland International Airport in Oregon to Seattle, Washington, on 24 November 1971 was due to take 30 minutes. It took several hours longer when it became the only unsolved hijacking in American aviation history.



## CLUE DROP ZONE

This is where the FBI assumed Dan Cooper would have landed and his descent was placed at Lake Merwin, a few miles southeast of Ariel, Washington. Local police carried out door-to-door enquiries, air searches as well as some on foot, and motorboats took to the lake. Nothing emerged. The FBI says wild animals ate his remains and the weather erased all traces of his clothes, rucksack and parachute.



## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

Once he was satisfied, Cooper released all 36 passengers and the air hostess Florence Schaffner as he had promised. The plane was refuelled and, having checked the parachutes and money that he had been given, Cooper told the remaining crew (pilot William Scott, co-pilot William John Rataczak, air hostess Tina Mucklow and flight engineer HE Anderson) to take off at precisely 7:40pm and head in the direction of Mexico City. Cooper gave the pilots instructions on how he wanted the plane flown but First Officer Rataczak told the hijacker that they would need to refuel before entering Mexican airspace. The destination was altered to Reno, Nevada.

Unknown to Cooper, two F-106 fighters from the local McChord Air Force Base followed behind the airliner, one above and one below. Once the plane was in the air, Cooper told the air hostess to join her colleagues in the cockpit and close the door. At about 8pm, a warning light told the pilot that the aft staircase door was open, a fact verified by the air pressure on board. At 8:13pm, during a heavy rainstorm, Cooper lowered the aft stairs and jumped from the plane over south-western Washington. He would never be seen again. At 10:15pm, the Boeing 727 landed at Reno Airport, and after a search, the FBI recovered two of the four parachutes, plus the black clip-on tie and mother of pearl tie clip that had been worn by the hijacker. They also recovered 66 unidentified fingerprints.

FBI Agent Ralph Himmelsbach was in charge of the investigation into the skyjacking from 1971 to 1980. He has said that he believes that Cooper died during the jump. "I can't say that it wasn't survivable, but it's unlikely," he said. "That airliner was going 170 knots at 10,000 feet. Outside air temperature was seven degrees below zero, with a chill factor of about 69 degrees below zero."

### EATEN BY WILD ANIMALS

He is further of the opinion that Cooper died during the jump and was then eaten by wild animals. His clothes, parachute and the money were all destroyed by the elements. That is the Bureau's explanation as to why no trace of Cooper's body was ever found.

However, Cooper had made sure that the odds were in his favour. He told the pilot to stay below 10,000 feet. If the plane had gone any higher, the cabin would have had to be pressurised, which would have made it extremely difficult if not impossible for Cooper to open the door. He also demanded that the flaps be set at exactly 15 degrees, which would have prevented the aircraft travelling at more than 320 kilometres per hour.

**"WHILE THE AUTHORITIES WERE BUSY ON THE GROUND, COOPER RELAXED AND DRANK A SECOND BOURBON AND SODA"**



FBI agents dig the sandy beach where a portion of the hijack money given to DB Cooper was found



Mr and Mrs Ingram held a press conference after their son discovered some of the money given to DB Cooper

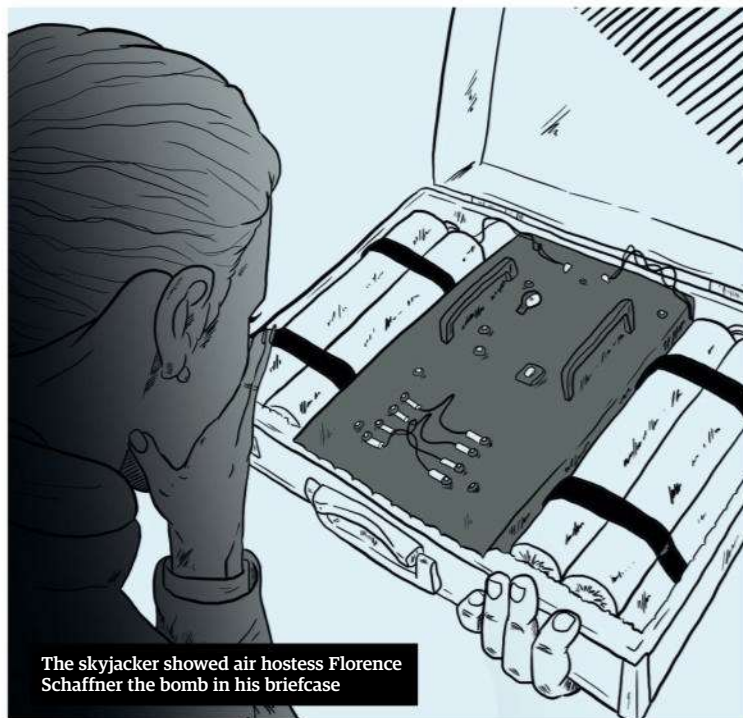


Eight-year-old Brian Ingram shows where he found three bundles of decomposed \$20 dollar bills that were taken by DB Cooper during the hijacking





Dan Cooper was dressed smartly as he boarded the plane



The skyjacker showed air hostess Florence Schaffner the bomb in his briefcase

**“A WARNING LIGHT TOLD THE PILOT THAT THE AFT STAIRCASE DOOR WAS OPEN, A FACT VERIFIED BY THE AIR PRESSURE ON BOARD. AT 8.13PM, DURING A HEAVY RAINSTORM, COOPER LOWERED THE AFT STAIRS AND JUMPED FROM THE PLANE”**



## THE REAL DAN COOPER

It was a few days later in the press that “Dan Cooper” was accidentally transformed into “DB Cooper”, after a local man with the same name and a criminal record was interviewed by Portland police. A wire reporter wrote a story identifying him as a suspect, and that is the way it has stayed. There are several theories as to where the name Dan Cooper came from, but one of the most popular is that it originated in a Franco-Belgian comic, where Dan Cooper was a Canadian flying ace and rocket ship pilot.





# THE INVESTIGATION

With so few clues left by the skyjacker, the FBI struggled to generate any leads

What the FBI knew was that the man calling himself Dan Cooper walked through an airport lounge and boarded a plane with almost 40 other passengers. Witnesses described him as being in his mid-40s, about six foot tall, and wearing a black raincoat, loafers, a dark suit, a white shirt, a black tie, black sunglasses and a mother of pearl tie pin. When trying to discover where he landed, the FBI was hampered by the fact that even minor variations in wind speed could alter a possible landing ground by some miles.

The Bureau used modelling to "suggest" where Cooper may have landed, and at first his descent was placed at Lake Merwin, a few miles south east of Ariel, Washington. Police carried out door-to-door enquiries, air searches as well as on foot and motorboats took to the lake. Nothing emerged.

### SERIAL SEARCHES

Towards the end of 1971, the FBI released the serial numbers of all the ransom bills to banks, casinos, race tracks and anywhere else large sums of money might change hands. Northwest Orient offered a reward of 15 per cent of any recovered money, to a maximum of \$25,000. However, again there were no leads. Then, in early 1972, Attorney General John Mitchell decided to release all the serial numbers to the public. Still nothing concrete emerged. In March of that year, once the weather had improved, the FBI and 200 local soldiers from Fort Lewis plus assorted National Guardsmen and civilian volunteers began another search for the elusive Mr Cooper - or what was left of him. They spent 18 fruitless days searching and even took a similar amount of time the following month, with the same result. There had also been a false alarm when two women chanced upon a skeleton, but a post-mortem examination showed the body was a teenage female.

As time passed, it seemed less than likely that any money would be found, and so in 1973, The Oregon Journal republished all the serial numbers and offered a reward of \$1,000. Another local newspaper, the Post-Intelligencer in Seattle, offered \$5,000 as a reward to the first person who handed in just one of the notes. Nothing emerged.

Finally in 1975, Global Indemnity, Northwest Orient's insurance company, paid the airline's \$180,000 claim.

### HUNDREDS OF SUSPECTS

In the year after Cooper's jump, 15 people attempted to hijack planes, all unsuccessfully. None of them were Cooper. There have been more than 1,000 suspects investigated by the FBI including a World War II veteran, a mass

murderer, a criminal and a university professor. All were ruled out but one recent name in the frame is Kenneth Peter Christiansen, a former Northwest Airlines employee.

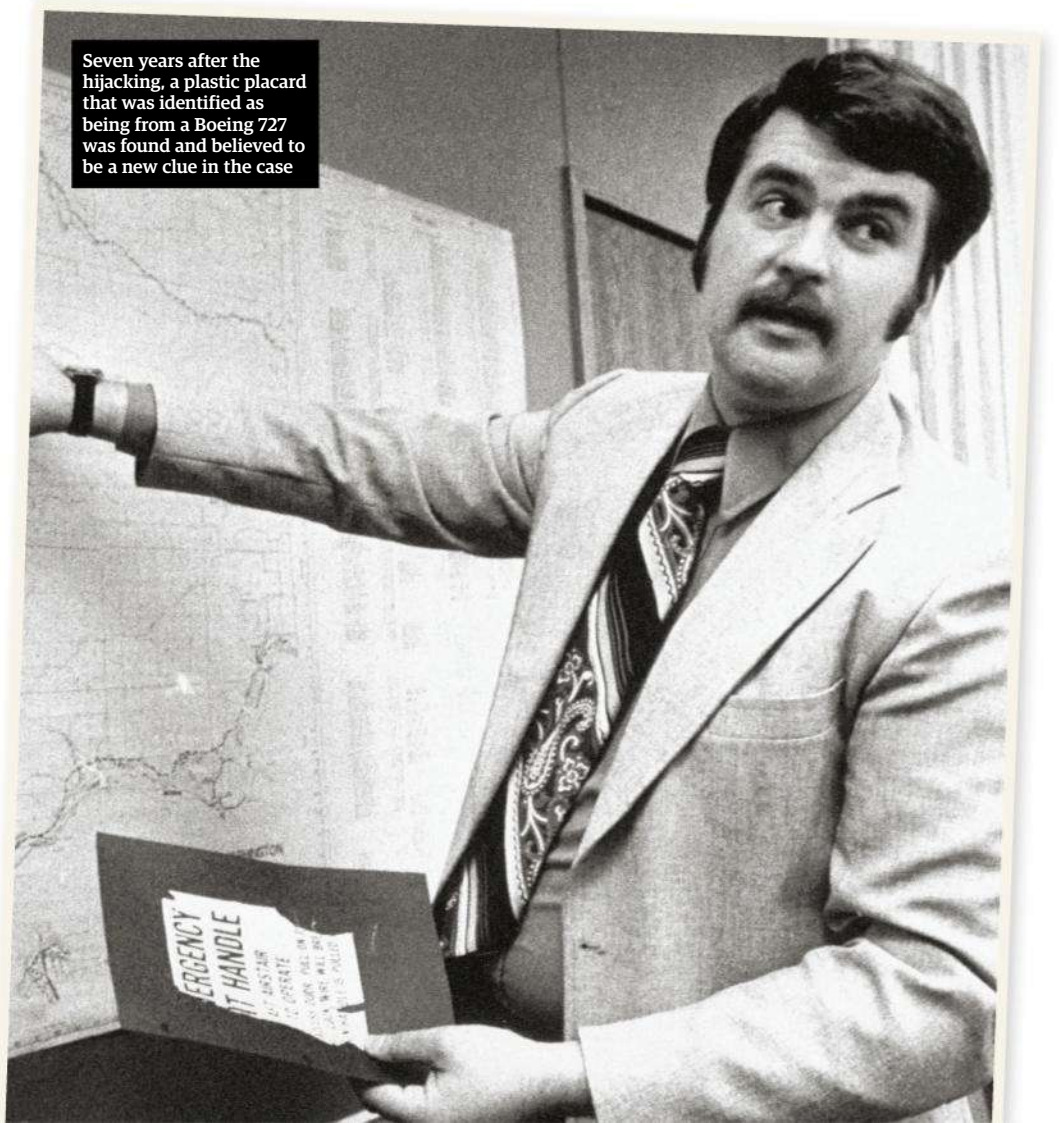
Born on 17 October 1926, Christiansen joined the army in 1944 and was trained as a paratrooper. He joined Northwest Orient in 1954 and worked as a mechanic, an air steward and then a purser (responsible for handling money). He never earned more than \$512 a month working at the airline before the hijacking. Afterwards, he loaned a friend's sister, Dawn Androsko of Fox Island, Washington, \$5,000 cash and then spent \$16,000, paid at least partially in cash, for a house in Bonney Lake, Washington. This was all within eight months of the crime. Where did the money come from?

The FBI ruled out Christiansen as a suspect because he did not match the description provided by witnesses and had no criminal record. He was 45 in November 1971 but bald, shorter, thinner, and paler than Cooper. He did,

however, smoke, drink bourbon and was, as was believed Cooper, left-handed. Florence Schaffner told a reporter she thought pictures of Christiansen looked like Cooper. Tina Mucklow has never spoken to the press. The FBI also discounted Christiansen because, as a former employee, he would almost certainly have been recognised by the staff. However, the hijacked flight was an internal one and Christiansen worked the international route. In that period, there was little or no mingling between staff.

Christiansen died of cancer on 30 July 1994 but as he lay dying, he told his brother, Lyle: "There is something you should know, but I cannot tell you." Lyle remembered that although his brother wore a toupee before the hijacking, he never wore it afterwards. He also learned that his brother had \$186,276.14 in a savings account and \$20,541.92 in his current account - amazing figures considering Christiansen had often resorted to doing odd jobs to make ends meet. The FBI refuses to countenance Christiansen as a suspect.

Seven years after the hijacking, a plastic placard that was identified as being from a Boeing 727 was found and believed to be a new clue in the case







The badly decomposed bills were found to have the same serial numbers as the ones from the hijacking



When suspect Christiansen died, he had a large amount of savings

## THE AFTERMATH

Nearly 50 years after the event, the police are no nearer to identifying the hijacker or explaining what happened to the bulk of the money

The mysterious Dan Cooper hijacking led to a series of security changes but this was not before a spate of copycat crimes that shortly followed. The Federal Aviation Authority ordered that all Boeing 727s be fitted with an apparatus that prevented the aft door being opened while in flight. A number of airlines went further and had the door welded shut. There was also a peephole fitted to all cockpit doors to allow the crew to observe passengers while the door was closed. Seven years after Dan Cooper hijacked Northwest Orient Flight 305, the company sold the aircraft to Piedmont Airlines, which kept it in service until 1984 when it was sold on to charter company Key Airlines. In 1996, it was broken up as scrap.

41 years after the hijacking, on 23 April 2013, Earl Cossey, a 71-year-old divorced man who had supplied the original four parachutes for Cooper, was found murdered in the garage of his home, on North-East 192nd Street in Woodinville, a suburb of Seattle. Like the mysterious hijacking case, the murder of Mr Cossey is an unsolved crime. Some tie it to the DB Cooper case.

Each time the FBI found a piece of parachute in the vicinity, they took it to Mr Cossey. "They keep bringing me garbage," he told the Associated Press in March 2008, after the FBI brought him

a silk parachute found by children on a road in southwest Washington. "Every time they find squat, they bring it out and open their trunk and say, 'Is that it?' and I say, 'Nope, go away.' Then a few years later they come back." On 10 February 1980, eight-year-old Brian Ingram found \$5,880 in decaying \$20 notes on the banks of the Columbia River, five miles north west of Vancouver, Washington, while on holiday with his family. It turned out to be part of Cooper's hoard, and 15 of the notes were later auctioned in Texas, raising more than \$37,000 for Ingram. None of the other 9,710 bank notes have been found.

Dead women seemed to follow in the wake of the investigation. In 1981, while searching for more evidence, a human skull was found. Excitement that it might belong to Cooper was soon discounted when it was found to be that of a female. Seven years later, a piece of parachute material was found in the same location but it was soon discounted as being part of Cooper's.

In March 2009, the FBI revealed that a team of experts from the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture in Seattle had been hired to investigate the Cooper case. They used modern techniques that had been unavailable in 1971. In November 2011, they reported that they believed

Cooper was a metallurgist or chemist, or possibly the manager of a chemical plant.

After their initial investigations, the FBI originally thought that Cooper was a former member of the United States Army Air Forces and probably a Seattle native. His knowledge of the plane, especially the placing of the exit from which he jumped, confirmed in their minds his military background. However, Special Agent Larry Carr said: "We originally thought Cooper was an experienced jumper, perhaps even a paratrooper. We concluded after a few years this was simply not true. No experienced parachutist would have jumped in the pitch-black night, in the rain, with a 200-mile-per-hour wind in his face, wearing loafers and a trench coat. It was simply too risky." Special Agent Carr continued with no small note of incredulity: "Diving into the wilderness without a plan, without the right equipment, in such terrible conditions, he probably never even got his chute open."

In 2016 the FBI redirected all resources allocated to the case to focus on other investigations. However, if someone believes that they have information - particularly pertaining to the parachutes or ransom money - they can contact their local FBI branch.









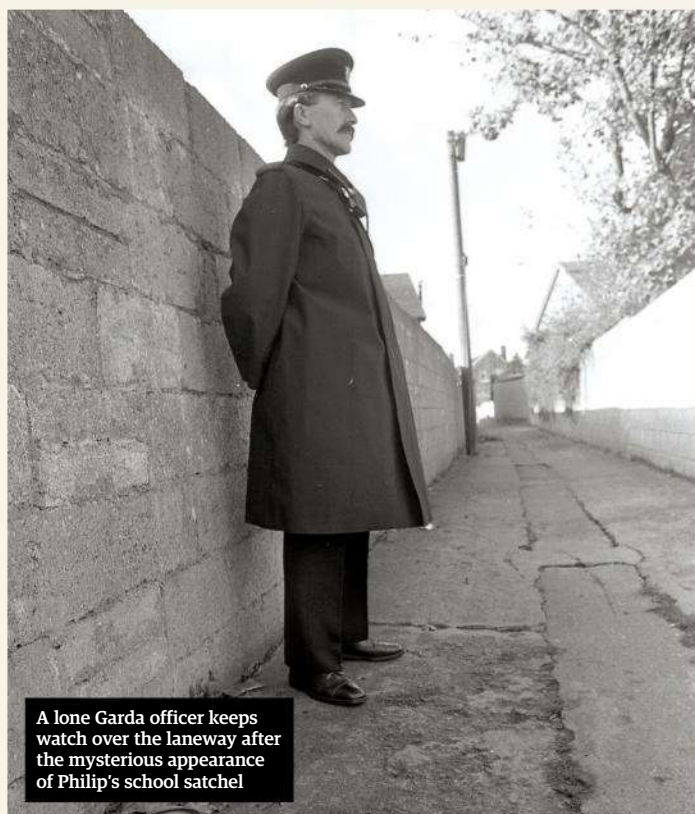
# THIRTY YEARS GONE: THE DISAPPEARANCE OF PHILIP CAIRNS

Almost 35 years ago, Philip Cairns disappeared without a trace walking from home to school. Was he snatched by a predatory paedophile or an obscure satanic cult?

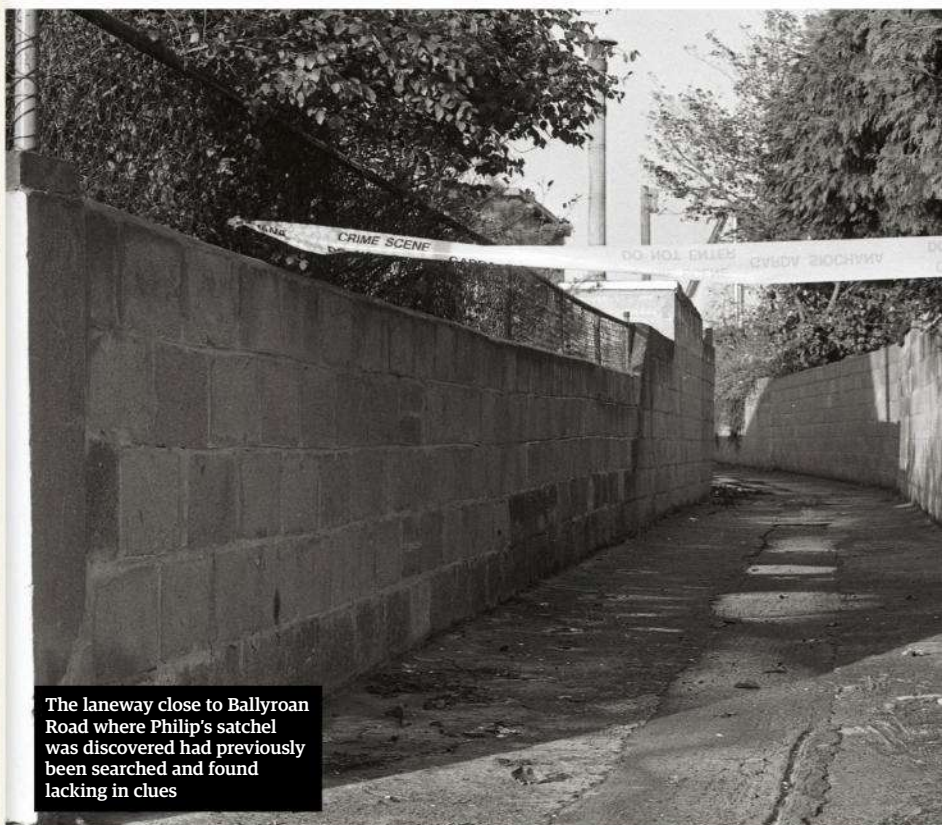
WRITTEN BY JOANNA ELPHICK







A lone Garda officer keeps watch over the laneway after the mysterious appearance of Philip's school satchel



The laneway close to Ballyroan Road where Philip's satchel was discovered had previously been searched and found lacking in clues

**Y**oung Philip Cairns, born on the 1 September 1973, was a typical bright, friendly 13-year-old lad. One of six children born to Alice and Philip Cairns Senior, Philip was a popular boy and an adored big brother who loved to play football with little Eoin, his younger sibling. He was a keen sea angler who regularly went fishing with his father and was often spotted accompanying his dad at the Dublin Sea Anglers Club where his father was a member. The boy was an integral part of the Catholic home where family meant everything.

## THE DISAPPEARANCE

23 October 1986, started out like any other day for the Cairn family. Philip left his house in Ballyroan and made his way to secondary school, Colaiste Eanna in Rathfarnham, south Dublin. He had not been attending the school all that long but had already made plenty of new friends and had impressed his teachers with his good manners and mature attitude. At 12.45pm, after a busy morning with his friends, Philip decided to go home for lunch to spend time with his family as he often did. However, this time they would never see him again.

Having eaten his lunch, Philip gathered up his school bag, said goodbye to his grandmother and left the house to return to Colaiste Eanna at 1.30pm. He had promised to meet up with friends that afternoon when school had finished. She would be the last known person to see him before he disappeared without a trace. He headed off up the Ballyroan Road but never made it as far as the school gates.

Alice usually got home by tea time, but was somewhat later that day as she had taken one of her daughters to the dentist in Dublin city centre. By the time she walked through the door she expected to see both her sons, but Eoin and his father were the only ones home. Philip had not returned. Her husband was initially unperturbed. Since the boy had recently started at the school he was most likely hanging out with his new friends. Alice accepted the notion for a while but after a short time her instincts told her something was wrong. She decided to ring around his friends' houses to see if he had forgotten the time and was playing football in someone's back garden. Nobody seemed to know anything until one lad told his mum that Philip had not come back to school after lunch. The friend's mother tried to reassure Alice. He must have just bunked off and was worried about coming home and facing a good telling off, but Alice knew better. Philip liked school and had never missed a lesson. It was utterly out of character for him to behave so badly and he certainly wouldn't let his family worry unnecessarily. No, something was very wrong. Philip was missing.

Word quickly spread that young Philip Cairns had gone missing and the close-knit community soon put together a search party. Family, friends and neighbours, including Brendan Vaughn, the Principal of Colaiste Eanna at the time, began by scouring the school grounds, closely followed by the local football fields but to no avail. Philip was nowhere to be seen.

It was at this point they called Rathfarnham Garda Station for help. Hundreds of Garda

Siochana officers flooded the streets, including the lanes and alleyways close to the Cairn's house. They, like all police officers, knew that the first 24 hours were the most important, since the likelihood of finding the child alive decreases rapidly after that. Specialist divers searched the nearby rivers, lakes and local estate ponds and when this failed to bring about any clues, a massive wide-scale search began, covering the surrounding mountains and forests.

The half-term holiday began a week after Philip's disappearance. The Gardai used this time to interview each student, particularly questioning his friends, but none of the children had anything to say that would be of any help. Of course rumours quickly sprung up and were regurgitated by the frightened pupils. Philip had been kidnapped by a terrifying 'bad man' who

**“WORD QUICKLY SPREAD THAT YOUNG PHILIP CAIRNS HAD GONE MISSING AND THE CLOSE-KNIT COMMUNITY SOON PUT TOGETHER A SEARCH PARTY”**





had spirited him away in his mysterious van. No such story could be corroborated and was recorded as a typical 'bogeyman' story. This phenomenon often occurs when children are involved in a frightening ordeal. Their minds simply cannot accept the situation and in order to make sense of it they create a story that they can all relate to. Such hyperreality quickly becomes truth and cannot be untangled from the genuine facts of the case. All such claims were carefully recorded but were of little use. Meanwhile, Alice and Philip



Tales of a 'bogeyman' circulated among the children in the community, as they speculated Philip was kidnapped by a stranger

## THE MURPHY REPORT

Although Alice Cairns is adamant that Philip never fell prey to a paedophile ring, it cannot be overlooked that her son's disappearance occurred during the prevalence of sexual abuse claims raised against the priests of Dublin. These shocking accusations ranging from 1975 to 2004 were investigated and the findings released under the Murphy Report. It was found by Judge Yvonne Murphy, that suspected priests were quickly moved to other parishes where they could continue their criminal activities undetected. Meanwhile Gardai assigned to deal with such claims, known as 'The God Squad', simply failed to gather any evidence. Is it so farfetched that Philip Cairns, a religious boy, fascinated with the church, was sexually abused by such a Priest and murdered to keep a dirty secret hidden?



After the satchel mysteriously reappeared, it was discovered that several of Philip's belongings were missing, including a geography book and several religious books





### VICTIM

#### 58 INCHICORE ROAD

A witness claimed to have seen Philip's unconscious body lying on the floor of Radio Dublin Studios after hearing an argument between Philip and DJ Eamon Cooke.

## TEN MINUTE WALK TO NOWHERE

The area of investigation was initially very small, dealing with a few roads between Philip's school and home, but it quickly expanded



### CLUE

#### LANSDOWNE VALLEY ESTATE

Brian Ruth called the Gardai claiming that Philip's remains had been buried somewhere on the Lansdowne Valley Estate. The call turned out to be a hoax and Ruth was charged with wasting police time.



### WITNESS

#### BUSHY PARK BRIDGE

A witness claimed to have seen a boy fitting Philip's description being bullied by a group of older boys on a bridge crossing the river at Bushy Park alongside Dodder Road.



### CLUE

#### LANEWAY BETWEEN ANNE DEVLIN ROAD & ANNE DEVLIN DRIVE

It was here that Philip's school satchel was discovered at 8pm, six days after the initial sweep of the area.



### WITNESS

#### CORNER OF BALLYROAN CRESCENT & BALLYROAN ROAD

A number of witnesses claim to have seen Philip either talking or approaching a car parked on the corner of the two roads at approximately 1.30pm.



### EVENT

#### COLAISTE EANNA

The local community searched the grounds of Philip's secondary school, including the football fields and recreational areas the night he went missing.



After 24 hours with no sign of Philip, the Gardai began searching further afield along the riverbanks whilst divers looked under the water

## THE IRISH SATANISTS

The Satanic angle began in 2001 when rumours of a cult masquerading as born-again Christians had abducted and killed Philip. Jim Cairns (no relation) claimed the sinister group thrived in nearby Kilkenny, where Alice Cairns had previously lived and other children had gone missing. It was suggested the secret organisation had come across the boy through his religious Bible meetings. The notion carried some weight since Philip was abducted just after his 13th birthday and a few days before Halloween - important dates in any Satanist's diary. Is this why the religious textbooks were missing from Philip's school bag? The media latched onto this theory as it sold copies but no evidence could be brought forward to confirm any such claims.



Senior were utterly convinced their son had been abducted by someone who was known to Philip. There was no way he would have willingly climbed into a stranger's vehicle or walked away with them without some prior knowledge of who they were. Unfortunately, they had no idea who that might be. They could not imagine anybody the family knew that was capable of such cruelty. The investigators desperately needed a break in the case and it was to come six days later.

## EATEN BY WILD ANIMALS

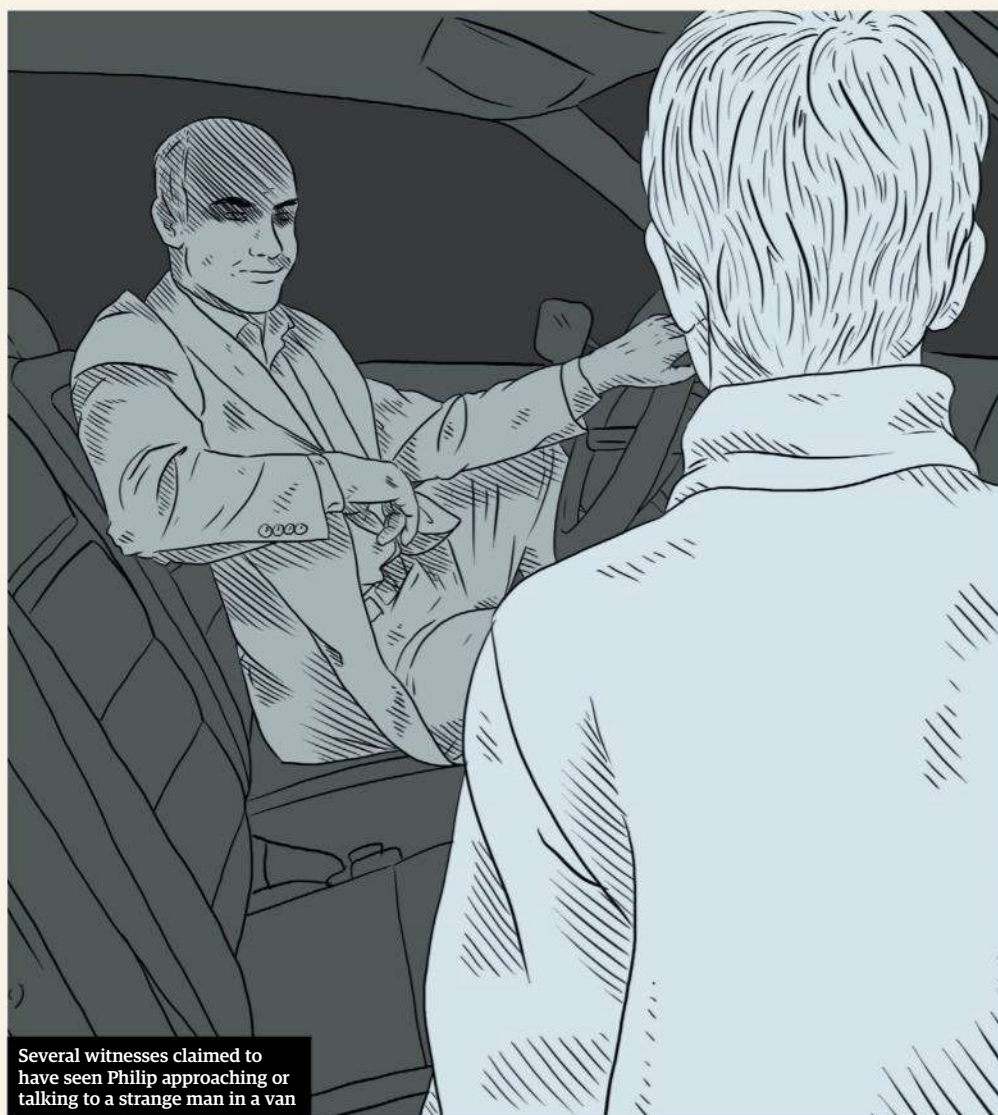
A week after the initial search of the nearby alleyways surrounding Philip's house, two 18-year-old girls, Orla O'Carroll and Catherine Hassett, frightened to walk home alone, stumbled across a school bag at about 8pm. They discovered the satchel in a laneway just off Anne Devlin Road, close to the Cairn property. Everyone was on high alert for anything unusual and the girls sensibly realised that this might be an important clue as to the whereabouts of the missing boy. They ran to the nearest phone box and called Rathfarnham station. Was this the break that officers had been hoping for?

When they arrived at the laneway, the first thing the officers noticed was the condition of the bag. The days following the disappearance of Philip Cairns had been cold and wet. In fact, it had rained almost every day since then and yet the bag itself was bone-dry. The alley had been carefully searched by both the Gardai and the neighbourhood watch team, but nobody had spotted the bag. Clearly, it had been placed there since the initial search and after the last spate of showers. This narrowed the timeframe of its placement significantly.

However, before the officers got too hopeful, they needed to get a positive identification on the bag. It was immediately taken to the Cairns back at home. Alice recognised the bag straightaway. It belonged to her missing son. The family were reassured that this was excellent news and it could mean Philip was in the immediate vicinity. They believed that they could now find him in 'maybe a matter of hours'. Alice, Philip Senior and the children were ecstatic. They were closer than ever to getting their beloved Philip back home safely. Unfortunately, everybody was rather more confident than they should have been.

Back at Dublin's Forensic Laboratory, Philip Cairn's school bag was carefully examined. Each item was removed and recorded: pens pencils, pencil case, maths textbook, copybook and school journal. Interestingly, other items had been taken, including his geography book and two religious studies textbooks. Killers often keep mementoes of their conquests. The Gardai decided to keep this worrying thought to themselves.

Next, Philip's belongings were forensically examined. At the time, 1986, DNA testing was a relatively new science and techniques were still being trialled. Trace evidence was impossible to profile at this point. Only large quantities of DNA



Several witnesses claimed to have seen Philip approaching or talking to a strange man in a van

could be analysed to produce reliable results. Certainly at this stage, uncontaminated samples in any useful amounts could not be gathered from the bag. It appeared to be yet another dead end. The Cairns family waited at home, hoping that this new clue would bring them closer to finding Philip but it was not to be and they were once again left with crushing disappointment.

## HELP FROM THE MEDIA

Although initially wary of too much publicity, Mr and Mrs Cairns decided to appeal to the public for help. Someone out there knew where their son was or had at least spotted him. Philip couldn't have simply vanished into thin air. The first step was to release a photograph. A smiling picture

of Philip dressed in his smart, blue Confirmation clothes was introduced to the public by Alice and Philip Senior. Information poured in from all over the country and indeed as far away as Manchester, England. 400 reported sightings were followed but without any concrete evidence each line of enquiry soon dried up. Local milk companies printed the now-famous photograph on the side of their cartons in a bid to widen the search but to no avail. Hundreds of people came forward offering rumours, vague recollections and bizarre suggestions as to the whereabouts of young Philip, including a number of clairvoyants and psychic investigators, all of whom appeared desperate to help. Despite their efforts, nearly 35 years on the case remains unsolved.

**“SOMEONE OUT THERE KNEW WHERE THEIR SON WAS OR HAD AT LEAST SPOTTED HIM. PHILIP COULDN'T HAVE SIMPLY VANISHED INTO THIN AIR”**



# THE INVESTIGATION

The investigation panned out like a dog chasing its tail, bringing clues and suspects but no answers

Many parents initially came forward claiming that their children had been approached by 'strange men enticing them into cars'. There were no reports of such incidents before Philip's disappearance and this was quickly put down to hysteria, a modern-day bogeyman. However, in 1989 *The Sunday Independent* newspaper released an article claiming that Philip had indeed been spotted around lunchtime on the day of his disappearance, talking to a man at the junction of Ballyroan Road and Ballyroan Crescent. Another anonymous caller told the Garda officers that he had witnessed Philip talking to a man at the same time, driving a red Mazda or Toyota type car. The caller rang back a further four times offering up information on the identity of the abductor but although he agreed to meet up with the Gardaí, he never showed. It is far more likely that this seemingly helpful member of the public was actually the abductor himself rather than an informant and the enquiry ended abruptly. There was no way of hunting down the caller in question. Ironically, this may have been the closest the Gardaí ever got to finding their man.

Some school children suggested that Philip had been the victim of bullying and that one particular bout of menacing antics had gone horribly wrong. Philip had been accidentally killed

and his body hidden in one of the local ponds. A slightly different version was also offered up by pupils at Colaiste Eanna also claiming that he had been bullied but had fallen into the river whilst escaping over a crumbling bridge. Either way, no one seemed to know who the bullies were and it is extremely unlikely that such students would have actively hidden the body rather than run away, leaving him in plain sight.

In 2015, a former gardener, Richard Kavanagh, came forward claiming to know who had taken Philip. He stated that he had been working for a deeply unpleasant man during the time of Philip's abduction. His employer had confessed 'I have done terrible things'. Kavanagh claimed that a strange, out of place flower bed appeared in the garden shortly afterwards. He begged the Gardaí to search the property, which happened to be close to the laneway where the bag had previously been discovered. Once again, nothing came of the enquiry, but as this occurred recently, this avenue has not quite closed yet.

The only named suspect in the case was local celebrity DJ Eamonn Cooke, ominously nicknamed 'The Cookie Monster'. The former owner of pirate radio station, Radio Dublin, and known sex offender was named in 2016 by a woman who claimed that Cooke had known of

Philip and had promised to take him to the station as a treat. The woman, who had been a child at the time, had tagged along and, whilst she was in another room, a fight broke out between Cooke and Philip. When she went back in the room she found Philip unconscious and bleeding on the floor. She fainted, only to wake up in the back of Cooke's car. She had no idea what had happened to Philip from that point on. The Garda detectives appeared to have taken the story very seriously. Much of her statement has subsequently been corroborated. Later, on his deathbed in June of the same year, Cooke was said to have confirmed some details but it is unknown which aspects he was referring to. The Gardaí later re-examined DNA evidence retrieved from Philip's school bag in the hopes that a link could be found. It was announced in August 2016 that no forensic evidence could be used to confirm Cooke's involvement, however he has not been officially eliminated from Garda inquiries.

Fellow DJ Gareth O'Callaghan disputed the claim in one of his many Facebook posts on the case. He preferred the suspect raised by Richard Kavanagh in 2015, stating that others had approached the DJ with similar information, citing the same garden as Philip's final resting place. In 2006, on the 20th anniversary of his

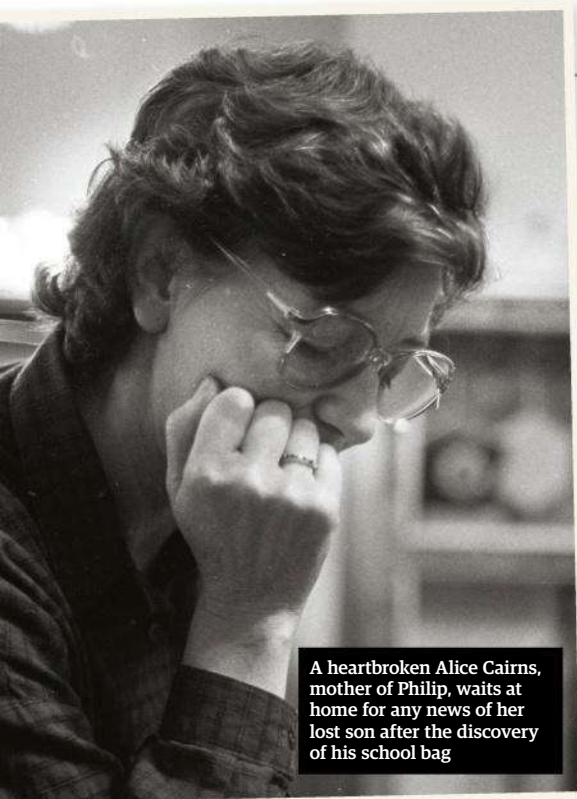


In 2015, a gardener came forward about a suspicious flower bed appearing in his employer's garden



Gardaí officers checked the golf course, fields and recreation area searching for any clues or signs that Philip had been there





A heartbroken Alice Cairns, mother of Philip, waits at home for any news of her lost son after the discovery of his school bag

**“IT WAS ANNOUNCED IN AUGUST 2016 THAT NO FORENSIC EVIDENCE COULD BE USED TO CONFIRM COOKE’S INVOLVEMENT”**

disappearance, the family stepped back into the limelight, issuing an appeal for any information. They had not given up hope and begged the public to help them in the ongoing search. A church Mass was held in Philip’s honour, reminding the community not to forget.

In 2007 the media televised a reconstruction of Philip’s last known journey back towards school using one of Philip’s old friends. At the same time, a book was published, entitled *When Heaven Waits*, containing a heart-breaking interview with Alice Cairns. The media attention stirred up interest and brought about a flurry of new leads but, once again, they petered out into dead ends. In the same month the Irish Crime-stoppers Trust offered a reward of €10,000 for any information. Many individuals came forward but the Gardai seemed no closer to finding him.

In 2016, a massive social media campaign began to build momentum, spearheaded by broadcaster, psychotherapist and author Gareth O’Callaghan. Through his widely read Facebook page, O’Callaghan has posted many recent articles suggesting that a terrifying paedophile ring may well be the abductors of Philip Cairns. The notion has once again opened a brand new line of enquiry, although this idea has been strongly criticised by Mrs Cairns who refuses to believe her son was taken for such purposes.

So who spirited young Philip Cairns away in broad daylight, over 30 years ago, on 23 October 1986? The suggestions have ranged from the pitifully sad to outlandish conspiracies - childhood bullying, lone child molesters, satanic cults, a paedophile priest ring, a group of deviant businessmen and a malignant local celebrity.



The school friends of Philip turned to the church and a special mass was held at the local Catholic church in his honour, to pray for his safe return

## THE AFTERMATH

Over 30 years have passed since Philip disappeared, so what happens now?

On 6 July 2014, Philip Cairns Senior passed away at Tallaght Hospital. He departed this world without any closure regarding his beloved son. He left behind Philip’s mother Alice who still lights a solitary candle every evening in memory of her missing boy. Philip had four sisters, two of which, Sandra and Suzanne, are active participants in an organisation working to find missing children.

The entire family - Alice, Sandra, Suzanne, Helen, Mary and younger brother Eoin - have all suffered a devastating blow, not only to have lost a dear family member, but also to live without knowing just what happened all those years ago. Should Alice and her children go on hoping for good news or should they quietly accept that Philip is gone? As Eoin stated several years ago, “You have to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. More than likely there won’t be a happy ending. After 29 years we just want an ending.” But as the years crawl by, the likelihood of closure

is slim. Time is not on their side. Many suspects and supposed witnesses have passed away, taking with them secrets that would have undoubtedly shed light on that ghastly day. Eamonn Cooke’s old pirate radio station at Inchicore Road, where Philip was supposedly seen lying unconscious on the floor, has now been demolished, along with any useful trace evidence.

However, though Cooke remains a suspect with the people of Dublin, it cannot be overlooked that the disgraced paedophile DJ had a distinct preference for young girls from vulnerable backgrounds. Philip never fit his choice of victim. Possibly a better hope could be pinned on the school satchel that mysteriously appeared in the laneway after the area had been searched. Whether Cooke had ordered one of his young female victims to dispose of the evidence as has previously been suggested, or the Kilkenny Satanist ring left it there as a decoy, one thing

is definite: the three strands of DNA are in the hands of forensic scientists and are probably the most useful piece of evidence they have to date. Although tests could not establish a link between Philip and Cooke, there is nothing to stop comparisons with future suspects or known criminals. The Gardai have made it perfectly clear that they are keeping an open mind and welcome any new claims. Detective Sergeant Tom Doyle has been in charge of the case for over 20 years. In an interview with *The Journal* he emphasised his continuing commitment to the case stating, “We don’t know what happened, it’s a total mystery but I’m satisfied people still have information.” Somebody knows what happened and when they feel able to share, there are plenty of people ready to listen. Anyone with any information relating to Philip’s disappearance is encouraged to contact the Garda Confidential Line on 1800 666 111, Interpol, or any police station.





# SNATCHED FROM THE SUPERMARKET

Katrice disappeared on her second birthday while shopping with her mother. Four decades later, her desperate family are no closer to finding out what happened to their beloved little girl

WRITTEN BY ABBY BENTHAM





The River Alme at Paderborn in Germany, where the Royal Military Police recently conducted a forensic excavation of the riverbank



## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

**S**aturday 28 November 1981 should have been such a happy day: a beautiful little girl, excited about her birthday, was surrounded by the doting family that loved her. There were no warnings or omens of the tragedy that would unfold. No one could have guessed that the day would mark the start of almost four decades of anguish for Sharon Lee, her husband Richie Lee, serving as a sergeant major with 15th/19th The King's Royal Hussars, and their oldest daughter Natasha.

The family, from Hartlepool, in northeast England, lived in an army barracks in what was then West Germany. The barracks were well equipped and, alongside the official buildings and parade ground, there was housing, a school, a playground and a NAAFI (Navy, Army, Air Force Institutes) supermarket where British soldiers and their families could buy the products they missed from home. It was at the supermarket, the most banal of settings, that the Lees' lives would be changed forever.

The supermarket was particularly busy that day: it was the last payday before Christmas and the NAAFI

## "I CAN'T BELIEVE A TWO-YEAR-OLD WALKED OUT AND DISAPPEARED OFF THE FACE OF THE EARTH AND NO ONE SAW WHAT HAPPENED"

was crammed with people happily shopping for festive provisions. Sharon Lee was also stocking up, but she wasn't looking quite so far ahead. Her focus that day was her daughter, Katrice, who was celebrating her second birthday with a party for friends and family later that day. Sharon's sister Wendy and her husband Cliff, who was also a soldier, had driven over from neighbouring barracks to be part of the fun. While Richie sat outside with the car, Sharon and Wendy scoured the aisles for Katrice's favourite foods and drinks. Katrice refused to sit in the trolley, opting instead to sit contentedly in her mother's arms as they did the shopping. Natasha, then five, stayed at home to play with her uncle.

### "WHERE'S KATRICE?"

As the women queued at the busy checkout, Sharon realised that she had forgotten to get crisps, so, leaving Katrice with Wendy, she made her way back to the aisle. In a recent interview with *The Sun* newspaper, Sharon recalled the heart-stopping moment she realised her precious daughter was missing: "I put Katrice down and said to my sister Wendy, 'Just keep an eye on her while I go back to the crisps stand.' It wasn't far away. It took me about 40 seconds, a minute at most. When I got back I asked, 'Where's Katrice?' [...] My sister said, 'I thought she was with you. She ran and followed you.' I went back down the aisle and she wasn't there. Panic started to set in. I couldn't see her anywhere. There was so many people. I was calling her name. Katrice couldn't be found - she wasn't there."

Most parents will have experienced that terrifying moment when a child disappears from sight, only to be



A photofit of a man seen at the NAAFI supermarket on the day Katrice disappeared. He was witnessed holding a child similar to Katrice and getting into a green saloon car



Katrice pictured as a baby with her big sister Natasha and her mum Sharon. Natasha has said, "I kiss her picture every night before I go to bed"



found moments later and hugged and scolded in equal measure. But for Sharon the dread and panic only deepened as the minutes ticked by. When it became clear that Katrice wasn't in the store, she sought help from staff. Richie realised that his wife had been gone for much longer than expected and went into the NAAFI to find her. He saw Sharon, clearly distressed, standing with Wendy in the manager's office. Rushing in, he received the terrible news that his daughter was missing. In an interview with Mark Stone for Sky News, he recalled, "That's when my world fell apart."

## DID SHE DROWN?

The jurisdictional position of the incident meant that both the German Federal Police, known as the Bundespolizei, and the Royal Military Police were called on to carry out an extensive search of the area. The initial assumption - which Richie and Sharon believe was fatally flawed - was that Katrice had toddled out of the supermarket unseen and fallen into the fast-flowing River Lippe. This theory has been angrily refuted by Sharon as "ludicrous" given that it would have meant Katrice walking out of the supermarket alone without being seen or stopped by any of the shoppers, before making her way down a ramp, across a busy car park, through a hedge and along to the river. Furthermore, Sharon and Richie believe that their little girl, who was dressed distinctively in a tartan dress, a turquoise duffle coat and red wellies, would never have gone near the water.

With Katrice still missing, Richie and Sharon were forced to return home without her and explain to five-year-old



Katrice Lee, who went missing on her second birthday. She disappeared while shopping for birthday party supplies with her mother and aunt



## WITNESS MYSTERY MALE

An eyewitness described seeing a man putting a girl resembling Katrice into a green saloon car in the car park of the NAAFI supermarket. Police paid little attention, focusing instead on the theory that Katrice had fallen into the river.

## WHERE THE LEES' WORLD IMPLoded

The area around Paderborn has seen sporadic investigations



## WITNESS THE GREEN SALOON

The day after Katrice vanished, eyewitnesses saw a green saloon parked in a siding by a bridge across the River Alme. Investigators involved in the cold case review feared her abductor had parked there while disposing of Katrice's body.



## EVENT 5-WEEK EXCAVATION

A five-week forensic excavation of the riverbank failed to yield any clues. Bone fragments found at the site are not believed to belong to Katrice. Royal Military Police investigators said "nothing else significant" was uncovered during the dig.



## VICTIM GONE IN A SPLIT-SECOND

On her second birthday, Katrice visited the NAAFI supermarket with her mother and aunt to buy supplies for a party the family planned to hold later that day. She wandered away from the checkout and was never seen again.



## CLUE THE RIVER LIPPE

The Bundespolizei and the Royal Military Police feared that Katrice had toddled out of the supermarket and made her way to the River Lippe. When the two-year-old could not be found, it was assumed that she had fallen into the fast-flowing river and drowned.





## HAVE YOU SEEN KATRICE?

Age-progression images showing how Katrice may look now could lead to her being found alive

What are the key things to take into consideration when producing age-progression images?

Key considerations to follow are getting input and reference photos from the searching family. Ideally you want to get photos of parents or siblings at or around the age of the missing person. It's very helpful to see family resemblances in the photos.

How accurate are age-progression images?

Through this process the images created are meant to spark recognition. The age progression is created to be a tool for the investigation. The forensic artist hopefully has maintained unique facial characteristics and applied features from the family reference photos to present a prediction, not a portrait, of the missing person.

How often do images like this yield results?

Thousands of cases involving missing persons have been resolved where an age progression was produced. Millions of people can see these images but it only takes one person to make the call to help the family find answers.



party. She points to the fact that the NAAFI was very busy that day: with so many people around it seems improbable that an unaccompanied infant would go unnoticed. "I can't believe... that a two-year-old walked out and disappeared off the face of the Earth and no one saw what happened," she said. She feels it is much more likely that Katrice was abducted, and Ritchie agrees, describing the feeling as "a parent's intuition". He told *The Hartlepool Mail*, "I have my belief that she didn't leave the NAAFI on her own. I have always said someone picked her up and walked off with her. We have always believed that it was as a surrogate child."

The idea that Katrice is safe and well and living with a loving family somewhere is certainly more appealing than the grim alternatives. But while it's possible that Richie and Sharon's belief is nothing more than a psychological defence mechanism that allows them to carry on living with the terrible burden of their grief, it's also true that there is a thriving and lucrative worldwide trade in child trafficking that involves the theft of children for adoption. Infamous and well-documented cases in places such as Spain, the United States and India have revealed a ruthless industry that is active even today. Could this have been a profitable line of inquiry for the investigating officers?



**BIO**

**JOE MULLINS** Forensic Artist

Mullins is a forensic imaging specialist who assists law enforcement by age-progressing missing children, facial and soft tissue reconstructions of skeletal remains and fugitive updates. He's trained at the FBI Academy and universities of Oklahoma and Dundee.

Natasha that her sister had vanished. In a 2007 interview with *The Guardian*, Natasha explained that "I didn't really understand what that meant. I associated losing something with losing a toy - you found it after a bit." Her main memory of that time is of her mother's anguished screams: "It was really horrible. Mums don't cry, kids cry. I also remember running round a car park looking for Katrice. I told my dad, 'She's not there,' and he replied, 'She's not going to be there, Tash.'" Disturbed by her sister's disappearance, Natasha began to suffer horrifying night terrors in which she'd dream about finding a pram in a nearby wood and pulling back the hood to reveal her sister's severed head.

### STOLEN TO ORDER?

Unable to buy into the official theory that Katrice had drowned, the Lees were convinced from the outset that Katrice was either taken to order for a childless couple or stolen by a childless couple themselves. Sharon is certain that the family was watched or followed, with the abductor seizing their moment when she went to get crisps for the



Katrice was wearing a turquoise duffel coat and red wellies when she disappeared from the supermarket in 1981





AGED 16



AGED 21



AGED 28



AGED 33

## THE INVESTIGATION

**Described by Richie as 'a sham', the investigation failed to uncover any meaningful leads**

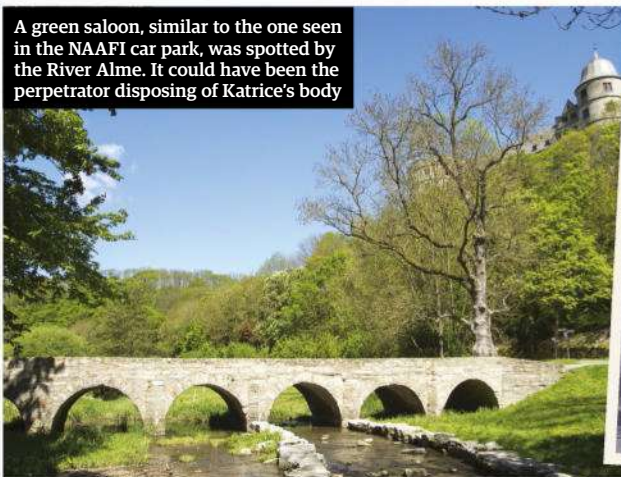
The Bundespolizei and the Royal Military Police rejected the theory that Katrice had been abducted, dismissing it as highly unlikely. Sadly, their refusal to explore this angle is just one missed opportunity in a wholly inadequate investigation. Richie has been vocal in his criticism of the search, saying that there was little coordination by the two investigating forces and that the family was "ping-ponged" between them.

Although an initial search of the river was carried out on the day of Katrice's disappearance, it was 24 hours before sniffer dogs were brought to the scene to search for Katrice's scent. Officers' refusal to entertain the notion that Katrice may have been abducted meant that border police were not notified of her disappearance until a full 48 hours after the little girl vanished. Speaking in 2012, Sharon slammed the failure of the investigators to even carry out basic procedures such as interviewing NAAFI staff: "It took six weeks for the girls working on the checkout on the day that my daughter disappeared to be interviewed, and in one case it took 20 years for one of those members of staff to be interviewed." Given that there were only three members of staff on duty

## MONEY MATTERS

In interviews, Sharon has described how the loss of a child made them "members of an exclusive club we didn't ask for membership of" and Richie and Natasha have both explained the frustration they feel at the lack of exposure Katrice's case has had over the years. Compared to high-profile cases such as Madeleine McCann and Ben Needham, public awareness of Katrice is very low - something the family has fought tirelessly to remedy. Media exposure is a problem, but it is not the only issue: funding is also a key concern. To date, the search for Madeleine McCann has cost more than £11 million: in contrast, the Royal Military Police has no dedicated budget. It is thought that the recent search in Germany cost around £100,000.

A green saloon, similar to the one seen in the NAAFI car park, was spotted by the River Alme. It could have been the perpetrator disposing of Katrice's body





## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

on the tills that day, this seems like an incredible oversight. Details of Katrice's genetic eye condition were also not made public. The condition would have needed two corrective surgeries later on as Katrice got older - information the Lees believe should have been shared with doctors and hospitals, and something they hope may resonate with Katrice if she is now living elsewhere, unaware of her true identity.

### THE 'GOLDEN HOUR'

Failings such as these are at odds with current best-practice in the search for missing children. 21st-century methods are far more sophisticated and protocols more firmly embedded than they were in 1981. Police - aware that from the moment a child goes missing, the chances of them being found alive grow increasingly slim - institute an integrated critical situation protocol. This allows them to draw on multiple resources and response teams, with significant manpower and technological assistance including CCTV.

A great deal of importance is placed on what police refer to as the 'golden hour' - the critical window in any major criminal investigation, as it is the key time in which officers are trained to secure evidence, lock-down crime scenes, locate witnesses, find missing people and track down suspects before they have a chance to get too far away. With every minute that elapses following a crime it gets harder to do these things, as crime scenes can be unwittingly contaminated, suspects and witnesses can drift away and the perpetrators can make their escape. In abduction cases, the golden hour is even more critical, as with every passing minute comes an increased risk to life.

The seriousness of this risk was highlighted in 2004 by Captain Fanie van Deventer, commander of the South African Missing Persons Bureau. He said, "International statistics show that if a child is kidnapped for sexual pleasure, police have only three hours to find it before it is killed or disappears forever. When it comes to abduction for pornographic reasons, the window period is 48 hours. The absolute deadline for finding a missing child alive is 72 hours, because after this period, we begin looking for a body." Similar statistics were quoted following the 2007 abduction of Madeleine McCann. Tragically, the Bundespolizei and the Royal Military Police appear to have shown little of the urgency and thoroughness of modern investigating teams.

### GREEN SALOON CAR

Crucially, eyewitness reports of a man seen putting a child resembling Katrice into a green saloon car in the NAAFI car park also do not appear to have been taken seriously at the time. The day after Katrice disappeared, a green saloon was seen parked close to a bridge over the River Alme, but again little was made of this by officers in the 1981 investigation.

A photofit of the man with the green saloon was released by the Royal Military Police last year, as part of a segment aired on the BBC programme *Crimewatch*. An RMP spokesman said at the time, "This is a newly identified line of inquiry as a result of analysing approximately 11,000 documents including eye witness statements... this piece of evidence was deemed useful to the investigation, so the RMP are duly appealing for fresh information from it." Questions were immediately raised about whether the photofit was produced in 1981 or 2017 and the spokesman, speaking after the broadcast, initially refused to be drawn. However, pressure from Katrice's family and from the media



Katrice's mother, Sharon Lee, who has never given up hope of finding her daughter alive. She has described her ordeal as "a nightmare you never wake up from"



forced the RMP to admit that the photofit was produced in 1981 but never released, as the investigating team clung doggedly to its assumption that Katrice had drowned. News of this latest blunder devastated the Lee family, and Natasha has spoken of how she was left "struggling to process" why investigators decided to ignore a potentially vital lead. Richie has also found it hard to come to terms with, saying "I feel very, very embittered and I feel very angry and I think any parent out there would understand why I feel that way."

### DEAD ENDS

With few leads, no body and little appetite for alternative theories, the search for Katrice ground to a halt. Although the case remained open, without fresh evidence it stayed dormant until high-profile campaigning by the family led to it being re-investigated in 2000. A woman had contacted the family, making a deathbed confession that a former boyfriend, himself a soldier, had confessed to her about abducting and murdering a toddler from a German supermarket in 1981. The man was arrested but released without charge due to lack of evidence, and the case was closed three years later.

## CRUEL HOAXER

In 2011, the Lees' hopes were raised only to be cruelly dashed by a hoaxer who claimed to be Katrice. Over a six-week period, Donna Wright sent a series of messages to them, with one reading: "I was brought over from Germany. Will you please help me look into this. It's a cover-up." DNA tests revealed that the woman was not Katrice, but it didn't end there. Wright became abusive, bombarding the family with spiteful messages and phone calls. The worst of the abuse was aimed at Sharon, who was told, "You lost your kid over a bag of crisps" and was called a "silly old bitch". When asked to stop, Wright, who has mental health problems, threatened, "You have not seen harassment yet." She was jailed for her actions.





100 British soldiers spent five weeks excavating the banks of the River Alme in Paderborn, where Katrice Lee disappeared after wandering off in a NAAFI supermarket

Age-progression photographs suggesting how Katrice may have looked at key ages were released in 2008, but they failed to garner results. In 2012 the case was again reopened, following pressure from the Lees' MP Iain Wright and Gosport MP Caroline Dinenage. Dinenage raised the matter during Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament, leading then-PM David Cameron to agree to look into what Dinenage described as the "chronic mishandling" of the case by the Royal Military Police. When Cameron informed the Lees that he had decided not to order an inquiry into the handling of the initial investigation, they requested access to the case files on Katrice's disappearance to assess the evidence themselves, but this was denied. Despite the RMP admitting that mistakes were made during the first investigation, a Ministry of Defence spokesman said, "The RMP does not routinely disclose information in relation to ongoing investigations. Should a new line of inquiry develop, disclosure of the case files could have a prejudicial effect on the investigation and potentially prejudice the right to a fair trial."

## A GRISLY END?

The Lees' search for Katrice has been fraught with disappointment, torment and anguish. Several years ago, a retired detective who specialised in child abduction cases announced that he believed child killer Robert Black had abducted and murdered Katrice. Chris Clark said that the paedophile was working in Germany delivering posters at the time Katrice disappeared. Speaking to *The Mirror*, he said, "This was a child abduction by a paedophile, and the manner in which she disappeared was exactly the way Black had been able to make children vanish... He'd have been visiting British Army camps along the Rhine, including Paderborn. I'm quite convinced Black quietly befriended Katrice Lee, took her to his van outside the NAAFI and took her away." However, Katrice's father confirmed that detectives had already considered that line of enquiry and ruled it out. He blasted Clark for "using my family's tragedy" to promote and publicise his forthcoming book.

# THE AFTERMATH

Could the Lees get the closure they are looking for?

Although sustained by hope and their love for Katrice, the Lees have long been aware that their darling daughter may no longer be alive. This horrible possibility was brought home to them again recently, when the Royal Military Police - working not only with evidence gathered during the initial investigation but also on new evidence - decided to begin excavating the banks of the River Alme close to where Katrice disappeared.

The dig was linked to the report of the man seen putting a child resembling Katrice into a green saloon in the car park of the NAAFI. The fact that the car was later seen parked by the River Alme had raised suspicions that he may have been disposing of the toddler's corpse. This latest search was being led by Warrant Officer Richard O'Leary of the Royal Military Police, and although Richie and Sharon still bear the scars of their previous experiences with the RMP, O'Leary was slowly gaining their trust. He insisted that his team was well-resourced, highly committed, had the expertise, and had sought advice from specialists, including the FBI.

In a statement, Officer O'Leary said, "36 years have passed and allegiances may have changed. We are appealing to members of the public and the military community, including veterans and retired civil servants in both Germany and the UK - do you know what happened to Katrice?"

Richie Lee welcomed the new investigation, explaining that he felt "vindicated", but he admitted to the BBC, "I'm a little bit upset that it has taken this length of time."

Although he and Sharon have been forced to face the fact that Katrice may have been murdered, investigators were treating this as only one possibility. O'Leary stressed that the man with the green car may prove to have been completely innocent and he has asked anybody who had a green saloon in the area at the time of Katrice's disappearance to come forward so that they can be ruled out of the inquiry. He also confirmed that the search of the banks of the River Alme was "just one line of inquiry," adding that "Another possibility is that Katrice was abducted and is living another life not knowing who she is."

Unfortunately, the riverbank search yielded no new clues, bringing no end to the uncertainty and pain for the Lee family, who are torn between a desire for closure - however that may come - and their enduring belief that Katrice is alive somewhere in the world. The devastating impact of the 36-year battle to keep the investigation moving is visible on their faces, but, as Natasha has previously said, "We have a gut feeling that Katrice is still alive and we will see her again. Until we have proof that is not the truth, we will always believe it."

Anyone who may have information regarding Katrice should contact Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



Could Katrice be alive and well somewhere, completely oblivious to who she really is?



# RUN FOR YOUR LIFE

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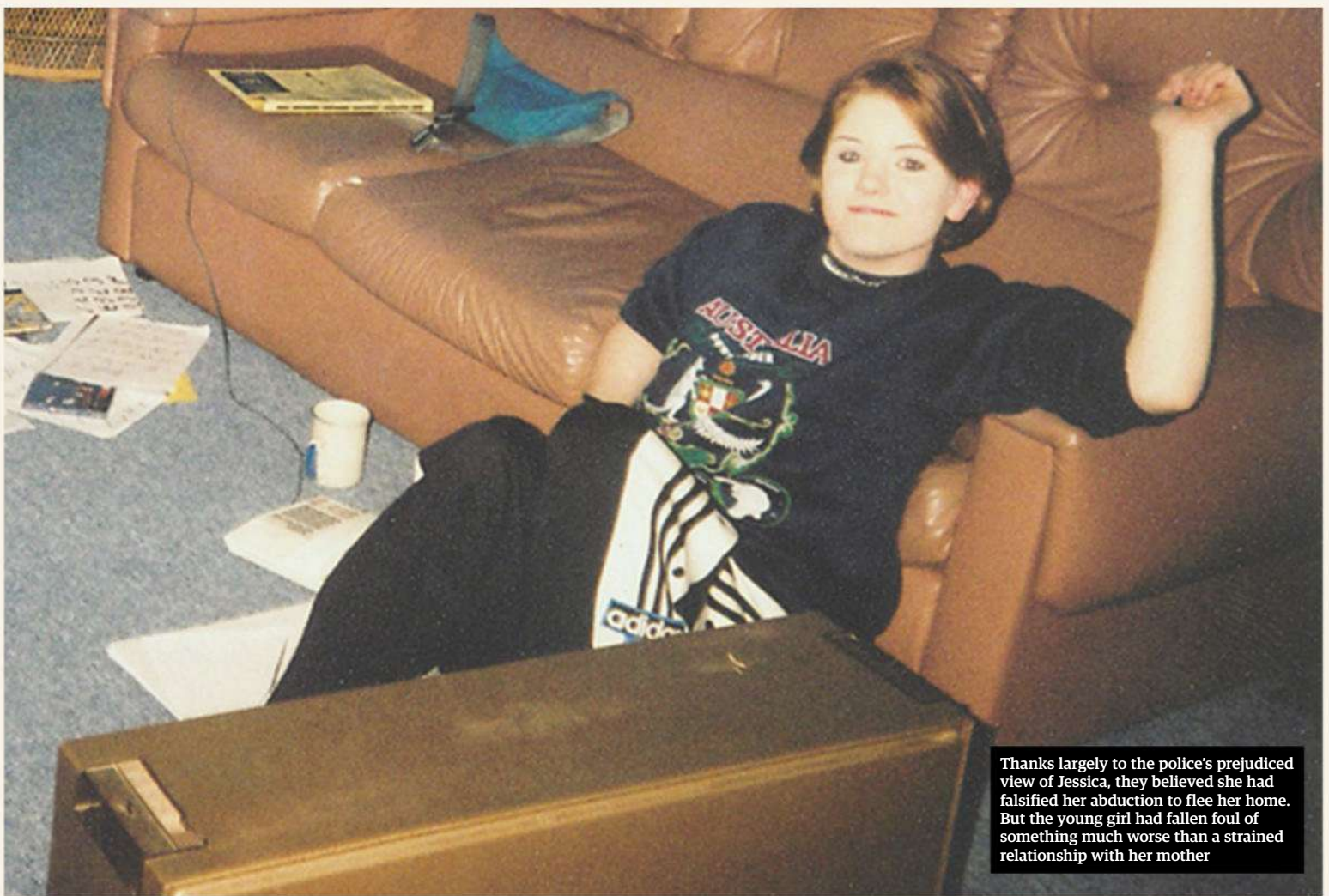
Picked up on a long walk back home by 'a person or persons unknown', teenagers Vanessa Conlan and Jessica Small thought their prayers had been answered. Instead a nightmare had just begun...

WRITTEN BY **TANITA MATTHEWS**









Thanks largely to the police's prejudiced view of Jessica, they believed she had falsified her abduction to flee her home. But the young girl had fallen foul of something much worse than a strained relationship with her mother

**M**ore than two decades have passed since 15-year-old Jessica Small was abducted from the rural town of Bathurst in New South Wales, Australia. A fun night out with her friend Vanessa Conlan ended with a terrifying dash for their lives. Only Vanessa escaped, and Jessica has not been seen since. A prejudiced and inadequate police force was reluctant to look for the tearaway teen, convinced she had simply run away from her troubled home life.

Despite Vanessa repeating the shocking story of Jessica's final moments time and time again, police told her she was "downright lying". Vital witnesses went unheard and multiple pleas for help from Jessica's mother fell on deaf ears. It took almost a decade for police to take the missing person report seriously, but by then it was far too late.

In 2014 a coroner ruled that the teenage girl had been killed by "a person or persons unknown". So far the New South Wales Police Force has failed to solve the case. With the 20th anniversary of her abduction having been and gone, it is more than likely that we will never discover Jessica's ultimate fate.

### SMALL GIRL, SMALL TOWN

Fay Connors was woken just after midnight on 26 October 1997 by frantic hammering on her front door. She found a terrified young girl "shaken, white and scared" on her doorstep, incoherently babbling and telling her, "You've got to help me find my friend." The terrified teenager could barely catch her breath to gasp out the horrifying ordeal she had just escaped from, to relay the details of the stranger who had tried to kill her just minutes ago - who was now driving into the night with her best friend trapped inside his car.

Once the panicked girl had finally been able to form the terrifying story of the sickening predator she had fled from with her friend, Connors phoned the police to report Jessica missing. Thanks to her lucky escape, Vanessa was able to recount the events that had unfolded that night. It was a story she would retell to police and the media for years to come. Unfortunately not everyone would believe her.

Prior to that fateful night both girls had been normal, healthy teenagers. Born and raised in Australia, they had become close friends in 1997. Both lived on Fish Parade with their parents - Jessica with her mother and Vanessa with her

father. Jessica had just entered Year 10 at Kelso High School in Bathurst, while on the opposite side of the Macquarie River, Vanessa was a student in the year below at Bathurst High School. Despite the fact that they spent the majority of their days in the company of other teenagers, the pair formed a close bond, meeting up after school at each other's houses, listening to music and watching TV. According to Vanessa, Jessica had opened up to her about her strained relationship with her mother Ricki.

Vanessa later said that the mother and daughter would often fight because Ricki spent her time and their grocery money on booze in the local pub. Jessica was left to fend for herself most of the time, and there was friction between mother and daughter when Ricki would suddenly insist the youngster stay at home instead of going out with her friends. According to the coroner's report that was drawn up more than a decade after Jessica was abducted, Jessica's life "had little structure or stability" in the months leading up to her disappearance. The young girl was living with her extended family and friends, and by the end of autumn that year Jessica had dropped out of school completely.



# “RACING TOWARDS A NEARBY HOUSE, VANESSA REALISED JESSICA WAS GONE. SHE WOULD NEVER SEE HER BEST FRIEND AGAIN”

## BACK TO BATHURST

Faced with the difficulties Jessica was having with her mother, she decided to leave town for a short while. After spending some time in Sydney, Jessica stopped off in Orange, more than 50 kilometres outside Bathurst. When Jessica returned to her hometown on 14 October, she and Vanessa met up. Vanessa noted that her friend's appearance had changed – she had cut off her long locks and was not wearing any make up. She was still sofa-surfing between her older sister's home in Kelso and her friend's home in O'Connell.

On what was to be the last day anyone saw Jessica alive, she and Vanessa walked into Bathurst in the early evening from Fish Parade. They met up with Jessica's mother so that Jess could get some money for the evening. This would be the last time Ricki would ever see her daughter. The duo then headed to the Amuse Me arcade on the main street of Bathurst, stopping off at Mick's Takeaway for some food. At the arcade both girls were enjoying their evening, playing videogames and occupying a pool table for a game or two. Vanessa recalls how Jessica had consumed a few alcoholic drinks but according to her, Jessica was only tipsy. After meeting up

with some other friends, they split their time between Amuse Me and King's Parade park. Later that evening the girls decided to head to their friend's home on Hereford Street, getting a lift from another friend. It was to be a fruitless journey when both girls discovered their friend had already left.

In an attempt to join back up with their group, Vanessa and Jessica made their way back into town. Traipsing back and forth to the places they had visited that evening, the girls were disappointed to find that everyone else had left. Their final destination was the Amuse Me arcade, but they discovered it was closed. Tired of walking the streets of Bathurst but not quite ready to return home, the girls decided to go to Hereford Street for the night and began to walk the short distance back across the town.

## A STREETCAR NAMED DISASTER

The girls had not been walking long before they noticed a four-door white sedan, which Vanessa identified as “like a Holden Commodore”, drive slowly past them before turning around and parking on the opposite side of the street. Hoping to hitchhike the rest of the way in the middle

of the winter night, the teenagers decided to approach the vehicle. In the past they had frequently hitchhiked around town, and this time it was Vanessa's turn to approach the driver, who casually asked them, “How were your videogames... and your games of pool?” He offered the girls a lift, which they happily accepted, and they pointed out that they needed to go to Hereford Street just over a kilometre away. Vanessa sat in the passenger's seat while Jessica opted for the back.

When speaking to Australian journalist Allison Langdon during an episode of *60 Minutes* in 2014, Vanessa recalled how the driver's demeanour changed, and she began to feel wary of the stranger beside her. Oddly the man was driving very slowly down the dark country lanes that led out onto Hereford Street, looking left and right as the vehicle crept along the road. However, on the approach to their final stop of the night Vanessa saw the lights of the house up ahead and asked the driver, “See where that light is? Can you drop us off there?” to which he replied, “Yeah, that I can do.”

## LAST GLANCE, LAST CHANCE

The girls were so close to safety. But before reaching the front of the house, he pulled down a darkened side road and turned off the car's engine and lights. Although there were numerous houses just out of sight occupied by sleeping residents, the two girls were thrust out into the darkness where no one was able to see or hear them no matter how loud they screamed.





## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

Unfastening his seatbelt, he turned to Jessica. "Come here," he demanded, reaching for the young girl in the back seat. "I don't think so," Vanessa called out to him, prompting him to turn his attention back to the girl in his passenger's seat. He reached out and put his hands around Vanessa's throat, tightening his grip in an attempt to silence her, perhaps once and for all. Jessica made a run for it, launching herself out of the car.

The attacker reached back to try and grab Jessica, but she was already out of the vehicle, and Vanessa too now lurched from the car. But before she could get away the man grabbed a fistful of Vanessa's hair and attempted to drag her back inside. Scared, the young girl fought back and ripped herself from his clutches, leaving him holding clumps of her hair. With both girls out of the car they ran for their lives, screaming for help. Running ahead of Jessica, Vanessa will forever remember the sound of her best friend's pounding footsteps behind her and her frantic screaming as their attacker gave chase, closing in on them. Racing towards a nearby house, Vanessa realised Jessica was gone. She would never see her best friend again.



### WITNESS

#### ROBERT FITZPATRICK

Fitzpatrick, who lived on Turondale Road in Eglington, was likely the last person to see Jessica alive. He described how the driver got out of the car and struggled with something in the back seat before driving off.



### WITNESS

#### VANESSA CONLAN

Living with her father in Fish Parade, Vanessa was the victim's best friend and the only living witness besides the attacker to know what happened the night Jessica was taken.



### EVENT

#### 26 OCTOBER 1997

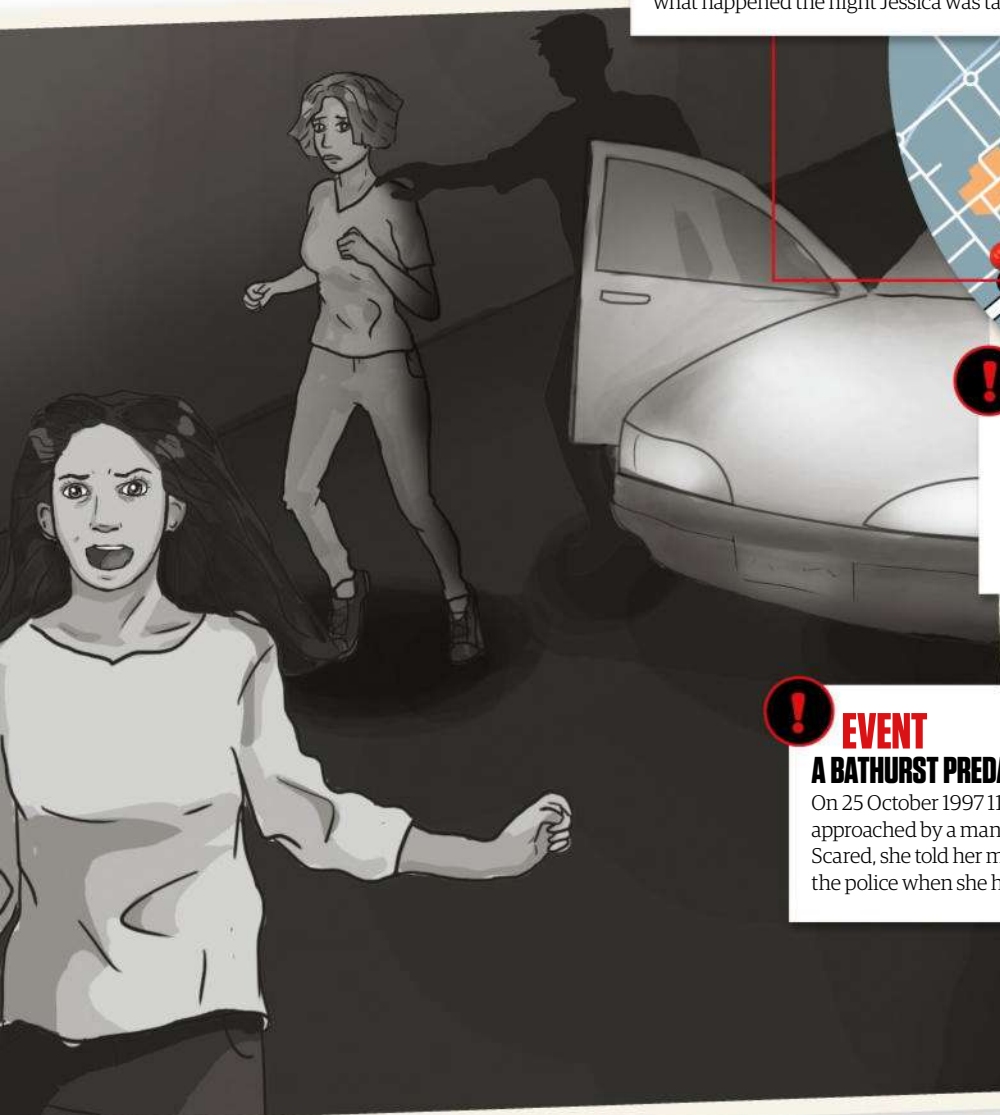
Teenage girls Vanessa and Jessica leave the Amuse Me arcade a little after midnight and begin to make their way home. They approach a vehicle to ask a stranger for a lift to a friend's house. He agrees to take them.



### EVENT

#### A BATHURST PREDATOR

On 25 October 1997 11-year-old Kayla Brein was approached by a man on the main street of Bathurst. Scared, she told her mother, who reported the incident to the police when she heard Jessica had been snatched.







## WITNESS FAY CONNORS

Mrs Connors, who lived on Hereford Road, opened her door to a frantic Vanessa, who was crying out that her best friend had been abducted.



## WITNESS WILLIAM ROSS

The employee at the Amuse Me arcade told police that a man who claimed to be working at Oberon Timber Mill was eyeing up Jessica while she was in the arcade and asking questions about her.



## WITNESS UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE

A woman reported seeing a car similar to the one described by Vanessa. She had seen it driving to a secluded area of Beaconsfield Road, near the Fish River. The car remained there for a considerable period of time.



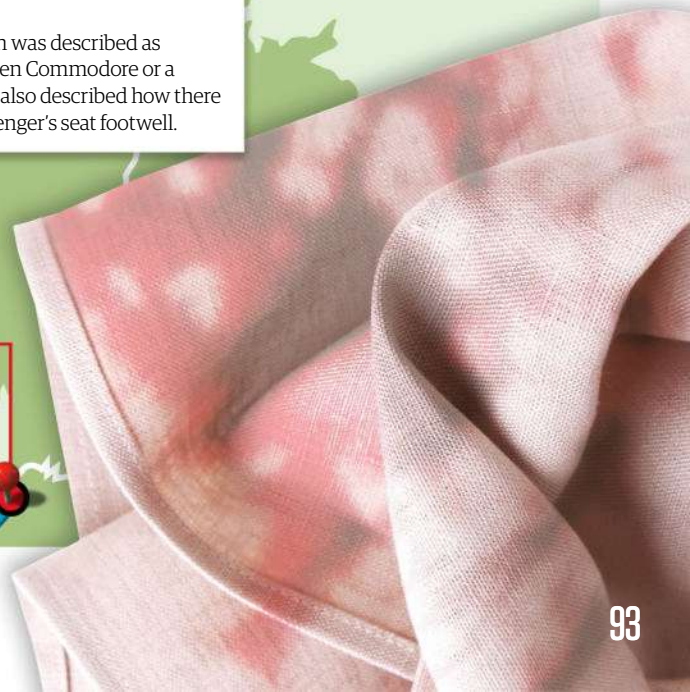
## CLUE WHITE SEDAN

The vehicle in question was described as a white four-door Holden Commodore or a Holden Circa. Vanessa also described how there were holes in the passenger's seat footwell.



## CLUE BLOOD AND BLEACH

Eight months after Jessica went missing, a bloody cloth, a bottle of bleach and some underwear were found in an isolated spot in the Jenolan State Forest only 75 kilometres from Bathurst, roughly an hour's drive away.





# THE INVESTIGATION

A seriously inadequate police investigation let Jessica's abductor and killer avoid detection

With investigators gathered in Connors' home, Vanessa told the Bathurst Police what had happened that night. Almost immediately Sergeant McFarland and Constable Rooney drove Vanessa around Bathurst in an attempt to look for a car matching the description she had given. The search for the car was unsuccessful. Vanessa says police told her she was "downright lying". Police figured that a girl like Jessica, who had had run-ins with the police before, dabbled in drugs and hung around with a range of troubled youths, was likely to have just run away. It would take police several years before they changed their mind, despite Vanessa's version of events never wavering or changing.

Within hours of learning of Jessica's abduction, the owner of the Amuse Me arcade came forward to police. An employee, William Ross, had told her of a man at the arcade who had eyed up the young girl before she disappeared. He had described the man, who said he was working at the Oberon Timber Mill, as being about 34 years old. He estimated that the Australian male was roughly 1.7 metres tall, of medium build with a beer belly and dark hair and was wearing jeans, trainers and a long-sleeved buttoned flannelette shirt, with a set of keys hanging from his jeans.

Ross said that the man had asked him, "Who's that? She looks like she's out for a good time," after he spotted the young girl dancing and having fun at the arcade. "That's Jess," Ross had replied. However, Ross's statement was not taken until 2008.

Robert Fitzpatrick had returned from his cousin's wedding to his home in Eglinton the night Jessica disappeared. He recalled hearing a blood-curdling scream outside, where he spotted a white sedan car matching Vanessa's description. Fitzpatrick told investigators that he had seen a man driving and a woman's arm reach up from behind his seat before being pushed down by the driver. Suspecting it to be a domestic dispute between two lovers, he kept his distance but managed to move within 20 metres of the vehicle, which had stopped, before it drove off. Fitzpatrick told *60 Minutes* that the road was the last one out of the town and led only to "darkness". When he heard of the girl's disappearance, he took the information he had to the police but was dismissed. Undeterred, he went back for a second time, and police reluctantly took his statement. It was filed away for another nine years.

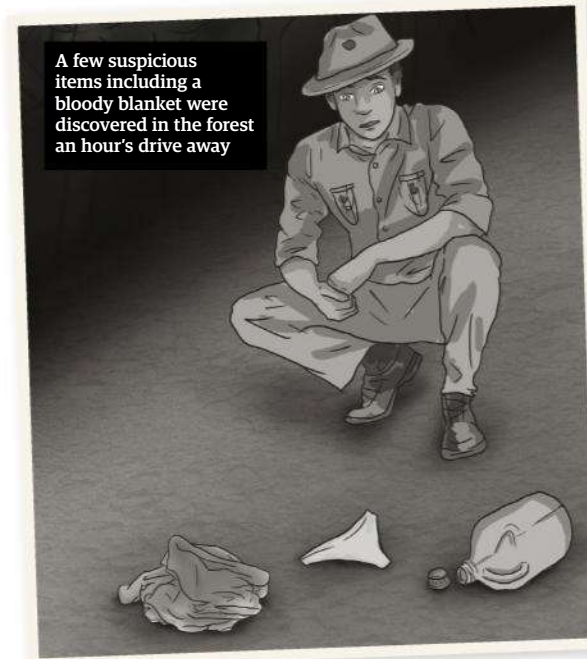
Witnesses were not the only thing police ignored after Jessica went missing. Eight months later a potentially crucial piece of evidence turned

up in a wooded area outside of Bathurst. A blanket covered in blood, a bottle of bleach and some underwear were discovered in an isolated spot by a forestry worker, who took them to police. Bathurst Police took the evidence but never tested it for DNA. It was eventually destroyed. Jessica's family were not even made aware of the discovered items until they had been destroyed and lost forever.

In 2007, ten years after Jessica's disappearance, Strike Force Carica II was created, headed by Detective Sergeant Peter Smith from the NSW Homicide Squad. With a decade having passed and still no word on the girl police had presumed was a runaway, Detective Sergeant Smith was tasked with solving the cold case and finally interviewed dozens of witnesses. With the passage of time, memories were hazy and details were inevitably forgotten.

William Ross's statement about the strange figure who had been hanging around the arcade the night of the girls' abduction seemed an important lead, and in 2011 investigators interviewed 400 men who worked at the mill the stranger had described to Ross. The investigation singled out two particular men, Andrew McBride and Craig Robertson, as suspects. Both men had worked at Oberon Timber Mill at the time of the abduction. McBride had worked there for 12 months, but the day after Jessica was abducted he left town for no apparent reason. Robertson, who witnesses identified as having a white Holden Commodore fitting the description given by Vanessa, had rid himself of the potentially incriminating vehicle by the end of October 1997, citing mechanical problems.

Both men had a history of predatory behaviour. The year of Jessica's abduction, McBride struck up a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old girl, whose mother he had previously dated. McBride was 11 years her senior. Smith said that during an interview with McBride he originally told them he had never been to Bathurst, but police obtained banking records that placed him in the city a number of times in 1997. In 2014 Detective Smith said McBride was the most likely person of interest. But according to the coroner's report, which drew attention to the serious police inadequacies that had complicated the investigation, "There is no direct evidence linking either Mr McBride or Mr Robertson to Jessica's disappearance. The converse is also true, there is also no evidence to eliminate them as persons of interest." The suspects deny the allegations against them or that they even knew Jessica.



## THE SUSPECTS

Why had police settled on McBride and Robertson as "persons of interest"?

According to the findings of Magistrate Sharon Freund, NSW's deputy state coroner, Strike Force Carica II had identified that both suspects:

1. Were possibly in the Oberon/Bathurst region around the time of Jessica's disappearance and had worked at the Oberon Timber Mill
2. Fit the general description given by the various witnesses who described an 'older man' at Amuse Me arcade on 26 October 1997
3. Possibly left the Oberon region just after Jessica's disappearance
4. Possibly had access to a white Holden Commodore vehicle
5. Had a predilection for younger-looking women (in the case of Mr Robertson) or teenage girls (in the case of Mr McBride)
6. Had a history of violence towards women
7. Cannot provide any clear evidence or alibi as to where they were the night that Jessica disappeared





In 2015 Detective Superintendent Michael Willing of the State Command Homicide Squad announced his belief that the young victim had been murdered and that a large sum should be offered for information bringing Jessica's attacker to justice

# THE AFTERMATH

It has been two decades since Jessica vanished and the police still have no answers

To this day the whereabouts of Jessica are still unknown. It has been almost 25 long years since Jessica went missing, and the person or people responsible remain at large. If she were alive today she would be a 38-year-old woman with a life and potentially a family of her own. Instead the hopes of a happy future for Jessica and her family have been dashed. Despite an appearance on *60 Minutes* in 2014, Vanessa has kept out of the media and is still haunted by that night two decades ago. To this day she questions why Jessica was taken but she got away.

Does someone out there know what happened to the sweet young girl snatched from the streets of Bathurst? Police believe it more than likely, and in late 2014 - six months after the coroner's court passed its report on the missing teenage girl - New South Wales Police offered a reward of \$100,000, believing it may flush the perpetrator out of the shadows and into the limelight. It was a bitter pill for Jessica's family to swallow, who felt that while the reward was generous, it should have been a larger sum, as was suggested by coroner Sharon Freund in the 2014 report. Freund also advised that the case be sent back to the NSW Homicide Squad for further investigation. A

**“SO FAR THE REWARD MONEY HASN'T TEMPTED OUT ANY ANSWERS, LEADING TO CALLS FOR THE REWARD TO BE MORE THAN QUADRUPLD TO AUS \$500,000”**

year later, NSW Government upped the reward to \$1,000,000, with Detective Superintendent Scott Cook stating: “We hope by refreshing the case in people's memories - and with this significant increase in the reward - we get that missing piece of the puzzle; the information that leads to an arrest.” So far the reward hasn't tempted out any answers. Police are silent about what their next steps are. Jessica's mother, who commented to the media that she felt let down, hurt and angry because of the police's initial investigation, remains an avid commentator to the press on her daughter's disappearance. Speaking on the 20th anniversary of her daughter's abduction, Ricki told the *Western Advocate* newspaper, “We, as Jessica's family, really need people to come forward and help the police with their investigations, because that's all we have.” But for now Ricki says that she

“will never give up that hope,” adding that she would like to see “Jessica brought home so she can be buried with dignity and as a family we can get some type of closure.”

Whether Ricki will ever get to bury her child or will spend the rest of her life wondering where Jessica's final resting place is remains to be seen. Recently the police have made some vital steps in trying to rectify their mistakes, in light of what they have learnt from the previous decades, it seems the case is steadily gaining more recognition. For now the perpetrator is still out there - potentially someone else still knows what happened to Jessica.

Anyone with information that may help investigators is encouraged to contact Crime Stoppers by calling 1800 333 000, or via the website at [nsw.crimestoppers.com.au](http://nsw.crimestoppers.com.au).



# THE DISAPPEARANCE OF ANDREW GOSDEN

Over a decade ago a 14-year-old Doncaster boy skipped school and bought a one-way ticket to London. What happened next remains a mystery that has haunted his family and police ever since

WRITTEN BY JAMES MCMAHON







## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES



At Doncaster station, Andrew was offered a return ticket, but he insisted he only needed it one-way

**T**hough the cases of Madeleine McCann and Ben Needham are significantly higher profile, few missing children cases have perplexed and frustrated quite like that of Andrew Gosden. On the morning of Friday 14 September 2007, just eight days into the new school term, Andrew, an academically gifted boy from Doncaster, South Yorkshire, got up, put on his school uniform, walked to his local park, waited for his family to leave the house, then returned to their terraced home. There he got changed out of his school clothes, then went and bought a one-way ticket to London, never to be seen again.

"The one thing none of us can imagine is that he would be cruel enough to put us through this for so long", said his father, Kevin Gosden, speaking to *Real Crime*. "We can imagine that he is dead, somehow restricted or that the time elapsed simply makes it too hard to get in touch. But all we want to know is he is alive and well. Where to go from there would be his choice, but he didn't grow up thinking he was unloved or uncared for, and he should remember that always.

"I remember the evening before he vanished, we were doing the dishes and I gave him a quick hug and said, 'Love you'. That is one of the last memories he will have as part of our family, and we would love to be able to repeat that simple everyday hug more than anything."

### BRILLIANT STUDENT

Born on 10 July 1993, Andrew was a student at the McAuley Catholic High School. Prior to his disappearance, he had a 100 per cent attendance

record. Andrew was also part of a government programme entitled 'Young, Gifted and Talented', designed to stretch the top five per cent of pupils. Big things were projected for Andrew in his coming GCSEs, with As across the board expected. In mathematics he was especially talented - some described him as "brilliant", though he enjoyed sciences, history and philosophy too.

He appeared to have a happy home life in Balby, a suburb of Doncaster that was once used as the locale for the outdoor scenes in the BBC comedy *Open All Hours*. Andrew was reportedly close to older sister Charlotte, and they shared a similar taste in music and fashion, while he'd sometimes attend gigs with father Kevin and mother Glenys. A year before his disappearance, he'd attended a Muse concert at Sheffield Arena with his dad. It was his first big concert. Andrew loved music, especially of the heavier variety. Photos of him wearing T-shirts by the Finnish band HIM and the UK's Funeral For A Friend circulated in the wake of his disappearance. When he left that fateful day, he did so wearing a Slipknot T-shirt.

There were no reports of bullying or depression, no known digital communication with anyone untoward - his games consoles had no internet connectivity, while any computers he used at school or at the local library were taken away and examined by police. The family had only owned a computer for a matter of weeks, his sister getting one for the first time.



Andrew appeared to have a normal, happy childhood and had a good relationship with his family, especially his sister, which makes his disappearance even more perplexing

Andrew loved reading, his favourites including *The Lord Of The Rings* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. Upon his vanishing, the Gosdens described their son as a "home bird". He wasn't the type to leave without saying where he was going. "He'd leave a note if he went to the corner shop," his dad said. Andrew collected rocks and gems, which he displayed in his bedroom. He wore prescription glasses. And - a detail that torments anyone looking for answers as to where Andrew went to - one of his favourite TV shows was *The Fall And Rise Of Reginald Perrin*, in which the titular character, played by the late Leonard Rossiter, fakes his death and starts a new life.

"The speculation drives us mad," continues Kevin. "However, if anyone out there has a theory that has not been through our heads in the last decade, feel free to share it. Yes, we have considered mental illness, joining a cult, teenage confusion about sexual identity, bullying at school, wanting to get to a gig, being groomed, kidnapped, trafficked and murdered. At the end of the day, we have not one piece of evidence for any possible theory. This is profoundly frustrating as it means we have no clues we can follow. What made him go to London that day is completely beyond any of us."





The Gosdens together on holiday. Kevin and Glenys continue to live in their Balby home. "He would know where to find us if he wanted to," said Kevin

## THE MORNING OF

The Gosdens remember their son being grumpy and slow to rise on the morning of 14 September: nothing unusual there, Andrew was, after all, a teenage boy. But what was to follow was completely out of character. Andrew left the house at 8.05am, presumably to catch his bus to school, though upon leaving he took a diversion to the local park. There he waited until the rest of the household had left for the day. Then he came home for the very last time, an act captured on a neighbour's CCTV system. He got changed, draped his tie and blazer over the back of his bedroom chair. He put his shirt and trousers in the washing machine. Then he changed into his Slipknot T-shirt, his black jeans, trainers, picked up his PSP handheld console (but no charger for it, strangely), his wallet and keys, slung his canvas satchel over his shoulder - made by his sister and adorned with sew-on patches of all his favourite bands - and then walked to Doncaster railway station, stopping only to draw £200 out of his savings along the way. Confusingly, he had left his £100 birthday money in his bedroom. He took no sweatshirt or coat. He didn't leave a note or any details as to his plans for the day.

At the station, Andrew bought a one-way train ticket to London. The teller suggested he buy a return for a marginally more expensive fee. Andrew didn't take her up on the offer. "She remembered him because he seemed too tiny to be travelling to London on his own," Andrew's mother Glenys told *The Guardian* a year after his disappearance. Her son was an especially young-looking 1.6 metres at

**"WE HAVE NO CLUES WE CAN FOLLOW. WHAT MADE HIM GO TO LONDON THAT DAY IS COMPLETELY BEYOND ANY OF US"**



There were several reported sightings of Andrew in London, most notably at a Pizza Hut in Oxford Street and sleeping rough in a park near Southwark



## MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCES

the time. "She told him it only cost 50p or £1 more for a return," said Glenys, "but he said he wanted a one-way ticket." Then Andrew boarded the 9.35am train to King's Cross station. On the train another passenger, who sat across from Andrew until departing at Peterborough, recalled the boy alone, sitting quietly, engrossed in the game he was playing on his PSP.

Back in Doncaster's McAuley Catholic High School, staff, concerned by the esteemed pupil's absence, tried to contact Andrew's parents, though a misdial meant they left a message on an answering machine that didn't belong to the Gosdens. By 11.20am Andrew had arrived in London, and by 11.25am he was spotted leaving the station on CCTV, stills of which would later be released by the police. It remains the last confirmed sighting of him.

### PANIC STATIONS

The Gosdens sat down for dinner on the evening of 14 September, thinking their son was in the house, either in the converted cellar playing videogames or doing homework in his bedroom. Upon realising he wasn't, at around 7pm, they began calling friends and neighbours, thinking perhaps Andrew had lost track of time. They then discovered his absence from school and called the police. Kevin and Charlotte decided to retrace Andrew's usual journey to his place of study, hoping to find some evidence of where Andrew had gone. They then thought that if Andrew had travelled anywhere, it would be London, since the family had roots in the capital and Andrew had particularly enjoyed visits there. Maybe he'd taken off to do something he'd apologise for later, thought Kevin. Maybe he'd just arrive on a relative's doorstep.



Andrew's bedroom, two years after his disappearance. Previously the walls were covered in band posters, but they were taken by the police to look for fingerprints

Yet it took a few days for the investigation to confirm Andrew had travelled to London, and searches then began to be conducted in the Chislehurst and Sidcup areas; the former was home to his aunt, the latter his uncle and grandparents. Clutching at straws as to where their son had disappeared to, the Gosdens began flyering museums and exhibitions they thought might be of interest to Andrew.

There was a later sighting that day that the Gosdens believe might be credible, in the Oxford Street branch of Pizza Hut. There was another in Covent Garden. Someone said they had seen Andrew sleeping in a park in Southwark, while another said they'd seen him getting off a train in Waterloo five days after his disappearance, on 19 September. None have been confirmed. It was as though he'd vanished into thin air.

One theory of why Andrew went to London was to attend a concert. Silk'n were playing in the O2 Arena the day Andrew went missing. Was that his intended destination?



## ALIVE AND LIVING IN SHREWSBURY?

One of the strangest details regarding the case was that in November 2008, just over a year after Andrew had gone missing, an unknown man visited Leominster police station in Herefordshire, West Midlands, and asked to speak to a police officer, using the intercom to do so. It was the evening and the reception wasn't staffed at that time. The man, who refused to share his identity, said he had information about Andrew. By the time an officer had arrived to take details, the man had departed.

Leominster police station is located on a business park, it isn't a location you pass by without intending to visit it. West Mercia Police appealed for the man to come forward again, but there was no further contact. That is, until Andrew's case was featured on the BBC's *The One Show* in December, when a man purporting to be the person who'd approached the police in Leominster the previous month got in touch with police. In doing so, he gave details concerning a possible sighting on Andrew in Shrewsbury, in November 2008.



## TRACING ANDREW'S LAST STEPS

Everywhere we know the schoolboy trod before the trail went cold

### ! EVENT THE PARK

Shortly after leaving his house at 8.05am, Andrew takes the short walk to Westfield Park in Balby, not far from his house. There he waits until the rest of his family have left for the day, before returning home.

### ! WITNESS ANDREW GOSDEN

Andrew went missing on 14 September. He was wearing a T-shirt sporting the name of the metal band Slipknot on it, black jeans, trainers, and had a homemade canvas bag covered in band patches slung over his shoulder.

### ! WITNESS CCTV

A neighbour's CCTV camera captures footage of Andrew coming back home. He gets changed out of his school clothes and sets off to the train station, a distance of four kilometres.

### ! EVENT LONDON ARRIVAL

Andrew arrives in London at 11.20am. During the subsequent investigation, a witness later reported him being on his own and having spent the journey contentedly playing on his portable PlayStation console.

### ! WITNESS WAS IT ANDREW?

Andrew is reportedly seen in a Pizza Hut on 523 Oxford Street. This is an unconfirmed sighting, but is said to be the most credible by the Gosden family.



### ! EVENT PURCHASING A TICKET

Andrew buys a single train ticket to London King's Cross. The clerk offers him the choice of buying a return ticket, but he sticks with the single ticket and boards the 9.35am train.



### ! WITNESS THE LAST IMAGE

At 11.25am Andrew is caught on CCTV leaving King's Cross station. This is the last confirmed sighting of Andrew. Where did he go next?





## THE INVESTIGATION

**Did the police waste valuable time looking in all the wrong areas?**

Andrew's family have long been critical of how the investigation played out in the days following their son's disappearance. Initially, the police focused their investigation on Andrew's family and the supposed reasons for him leaving, even before they'd reviewed the CCTV footage at King's Cross. This was despite eyewitnesses stating that they had seen Andrew boarding the train. Kevin has frequently claimed that CCTV footage from buses and the adjacent tube station weren't even requested by the authorities. Consequently, there remains a gulf of distrust between the family and police, with Kevin frequently describing the investigation as, "too slow, too chaotic and disorganised".

"We have had some excellent police officers work with us over the years," said Kevin, "some of whom I will always remember with gratitude. However, things went badly wrong with some officers in the initial stages, largely as they made assumptions that we had abused Andrew. This meant vital CCTV footage from the day was never requested. We have, over time, submitted around 100 complaints to the police. Some have been dealt with, and systems have been put into place to prevent others having to face what we have. For example, their computer system at the time has since been declared unfit for purpose and has now been replaced with something far more helpful for police officers."

"However, some complaints have never been addressed at all," continued Kevin. "Like the failure to retrieve CCTV. While it is too late to undo it, some apology would be helpful for us as a family and again, some assurance that this will be more intelligently handled in future cases seems essential. There's also some complaints that are simply inconclusive, in the sense that no one can prove either way who said what. But fair enough. I know what we think."

It was the Gosdens who discovered the neighbour's CCTV footage, which was vital in helping piece together Andrew's movements while he was still in Balby. It was also they who spoke to the rail employee who sold Andrew the train ticket, as well as the passenger who sat opposite him on the train. The CCTV footage at King's Cross wasn't located until 27 days after Andrew had gone missing, meaning that by the time it was seen, CCTV in surrounding transport links like the London Underground had already been wiped.

The BBC reported that the problem lay with South Yorkshire Police asking the British Transport Police to search the CCTV footage within two days of Andrew going missing, but the British Transport Police were unable to pick Andrew out from the



## KEVIN GOSDEN ON LEAVING HOME

"Anyone thinking of disappearing, I would say that you are not alone. I think perhaps most people at some point have just thought to themselves they could just chuck everything in and disappear to start over. It is a more common thought perhaps than we acknowledge. The facts are, if you're under 18 and you go missing, you have a 45 per cent chance of being abused in some way, whether verbally, physically, sexually, or via means like drugs. A smaller percentage of those will also find themselves cold, hungry, lonely, without a place to sleep and extremely frightened and vulnerable. Another percentage will find themselves forced into prostitution and the like. If you are in a tough situation, no one is going to judge you for that. We all make bad calls at times. The number for Missing People is 116000 and is available 24/7, or use the text service or online chat service. They're free and they can help."

crowds. It required a police officer from Doncaster to travel to London to study the footage before Andrew was spotted, showing him leaving King's Cross station. Kevin is also critical of the time it took for police to follow up the alleged sightings in the Oxford Street branch of Pizza Hut, as well as the one in Covent Garden. Allegedly it took police six weeks to speak to the woman who'd reported the latter.

"At the moment we have an excellent officer who heads up anything to do with Andrew's case," Kevin told *Real Crime* in 2018. "He took over a few months back and realised when reviewing the records that no one had communicated with us for a number of years. If I had potential information I did not know where to send it, so the Missing People charity did it for us and we never heard any outcome. We have met, been through things, we are all on the same page and he is a really genuine, decent, helpful and efficient guy. We are really grateful to have him."

Understandably, it's not easy for the Gosdens to completely forgive and forget. "It would be fair to say that our relationship with the police will always be an uneasy one involving very negative feelings, but we try to be reasonable our end. Let's just say that the reputation for endemic problems within South Yorkshire Police that has bore the likes of Hillsborough, the Rotherham Child Abuse scandal, Cliff Richard and the like, is slowly changing, but in our experience is well deserved."

Like any case as puzzling as Andrew's, an online community has risen trying to 'solve' the mystery. Yet with few facts to draw upon, much is mere speculation. One idea was that Andrew, the rock music fan, had travelled to London to attend a concert that evening. The Gosdens subsequently scanned London gig listings in the back of music magazines, looking for performances that might be relevant to Andrew's interests. 30 Seconds To Mars were playing that night, as were the thrash metal band Send More Paramedics. The strongest theory was that maybe Andrew had attended a concert by the band SikTh at the O2 Academy in Islington. On the night Andrew arrived in London, SikTh were playing what was billed as their last show with singers Mikee Goodman and Justin Hill - an historic show, and perhaps reason to travel some distance. But there's no evidence that Andrew was even a fan.

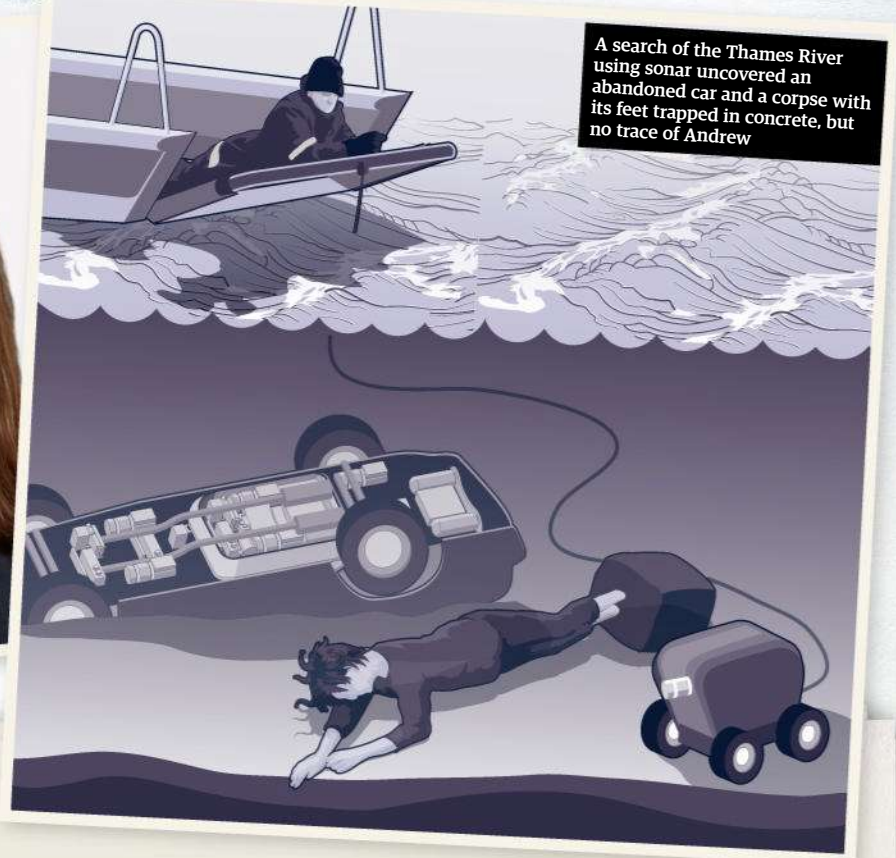
There was a similar theory that Andrew had travelled to London to attend a YouTube convention. A man who'd recorded footage of the event contacted the Gosdens suggesting Andrew was in the video. Kevin doesn't believe the boy is his son: he has glasses, 'emo' hair, but is just not quite a fit for Andrew. And again, there's no firm knowledge that Andrew was a fan of any YouTubers.

Frustrated by the lack of progress, in May 2011 the Gosdens paid the company Liquavision to conduct a sonar search of the River Thames, using similar technology as that used to locate items at sea. The search took place between the Thames Barrier and Tower Bridge, and unveiled a sunken boat, a car, and even an unidentified corpse, rumoured to have its feet encased in concrete, but no sign of Andrew.





These recent age-processed images of Andrew give a clear idea of how he might look today



A search of the Thames River using sonar uncovered an abandoned car and a corpse with its feet trapped in concrete, but no trace of Andrew

## THE AFTERMATH

**How can you grieve without a body? And how can you ever give up hope without definite answers?**

The face of the Missing People charity's 'Find Every Child' campaign, Andrew's face could be seen on billboards across the UK. In this media, much attention is paid to his right ear, which features a unique double ridge on the side. For reasons unknown, this was a detail police originally asked the family to withhold from the public.

Without a body, Andrew's father Kevin still maintains hope he will one day see his son alive, despite a police forensic psychology report that suggests Andrew has long passed. Glenys continues to work in speech therapy. Charlotte, also a gifted student at McAuley, gained 11 GCSEs the year of her brother's disappearance, nine of them A\*. Two years later, she got five As at A-Level, winning a place to read philosophy, politics and economics at Balliol College, Oxford. Understandably overwhelmed by the events of the years preceding, she stopped her studies after the first week of her second term. She now works in banking and is married. Charlotte told *The Times* in 2012 about how, on the morning of Andrew's disappearance, she'd gone into his room, it being the only room in the house with a full-length mirror. "He was lying in, as normal, so I woke him," she recalled. "You always wish, when you look back, that you could have done or said something different. But you know it's too late."

Determined to find answers, the Gosdens have spent year upon year searching the capital. Andrew's face appeared on milk cartons sold by the supermarket chain Iceland and on the side of

bin lorries. A family friend offered up their Porsche as a reward for information that would relate to Andrew's location. The Gosdens appeared on TV shows *Panorama* and *Lorraine* to appeal to anyone who might know anything, upping their efforts in 2017, the tenth anniversary of Andrew's disappearance. Cruelly, they've had to endure people contacting them pretending to be their missing son. South Yorkshire Police also made a plea for new information.

Over the years, the Gosdens have continued to work the music theory, with friends and family handing out in the region of 10,000 flyers at a Muse gig in October of 2009, at the same Sheffield Arena venue they'd all seen the band together at two years prior. They did the same a few days later, as Muse performed at London's O2 Arena. Maybe Andrew had gone to check out his old favourites? Muse even offered free tickets if Andrew would reveal himself. The Gosdens did similarly at the Whitby Goth Festival that same year.

It was also in 2009 that the Gosdens made the agonising decision to largely redecorate Andrew's room, though the gem and rock collection remain. "There's a voice in you that says, 'Just get out, be somewhere different, and then it won't feel so imminent,'" Kevin told the BBC when asked if the family had ever considered leaving the Balby house they once shared with their son. "But there's also a little voice in my head that says, 'He went off with your front door key and we haven't changed the

locks' so, hey, in the hope that he's still alive and well somewhere, we're still here." The family have spent the years since Andrew went missing topping up his bank account with regular sums of money. There have been no withdrawals.

"If Andrew is alive," Kevin said, "we want people to be looking for a guy... who speaks quickly and quietly, maybe with a trace of a Yorkshire accent still. He will need strong prescription glasses or contacts. He will have an unusual shape to his right ear and he will still be deaf in his left ear, meaning that you could just notice if he does not turn to sound correctly. Andrew can hear a pin drop in his right ear, but he does not do stereo. It is not likely that he would be very tall, five feet eight or nine inches (1.73-1.75 metres)... He probably still walks quickly with long strides. Those are things someone could pick up on now. He could have altered his appearance significantly, for example, his hair, facial hair, dress sense, swapping glasses for contacts, but those sorts of details... could give him away."

If anyone has seen Andrew, they can contact Missing People anonymously by calling or texting 116 000 or by emailing the charity at [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk). The charity's helpline also offers help and support to anyone affected by the issue of missing and is free to contact and open 24 hours a day thanks to support from players of People's Postcode Lottery. You can also pass sightings information via the website at [www.missingpeople.org.uk/sightings](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/sightings).



# THE WEIRD & WACKY

**112** ARE WE  
REALLY ALONE?



Geddy Images

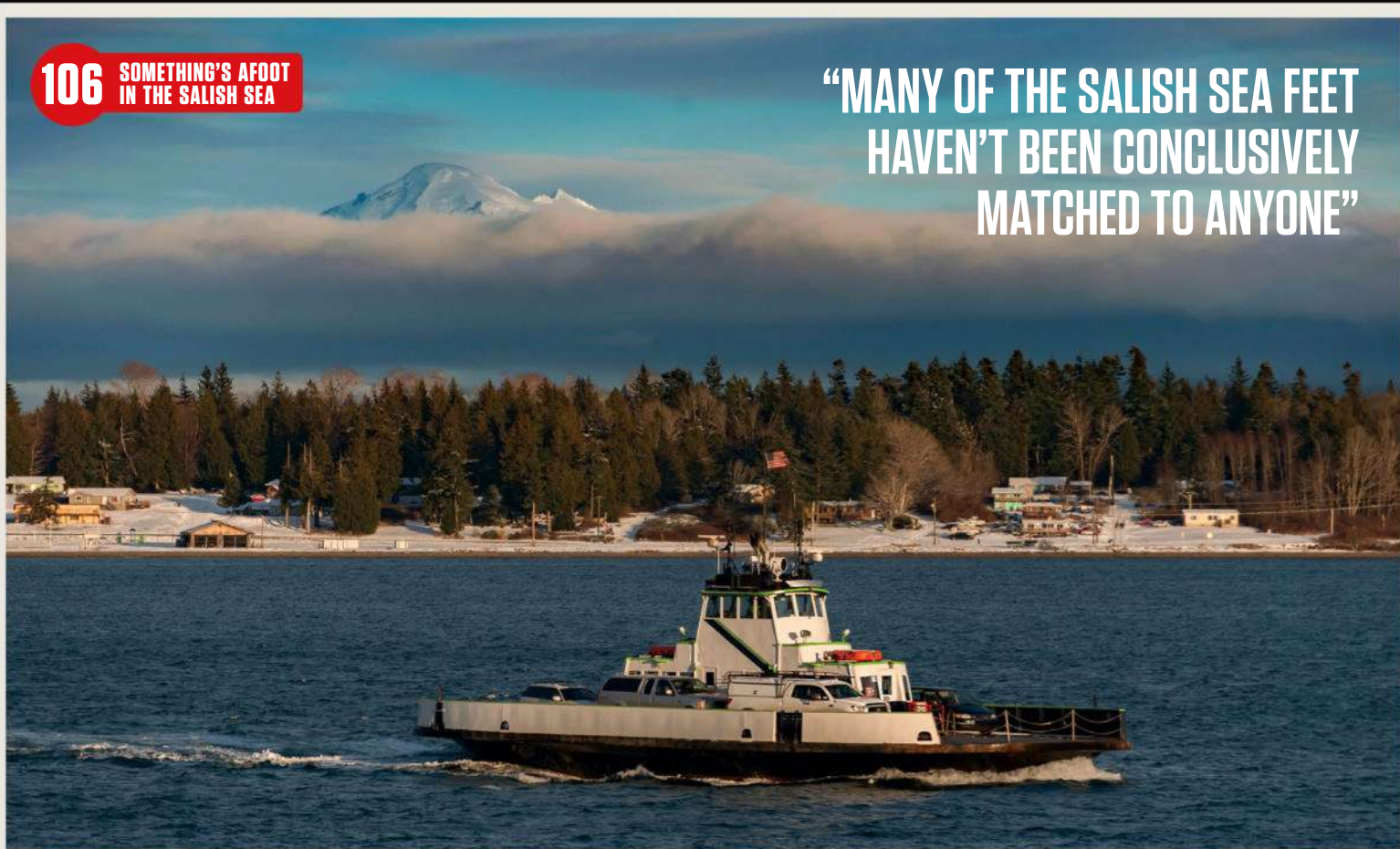
**118** THE BIGGEST ART  
THEFT IN HISTORY





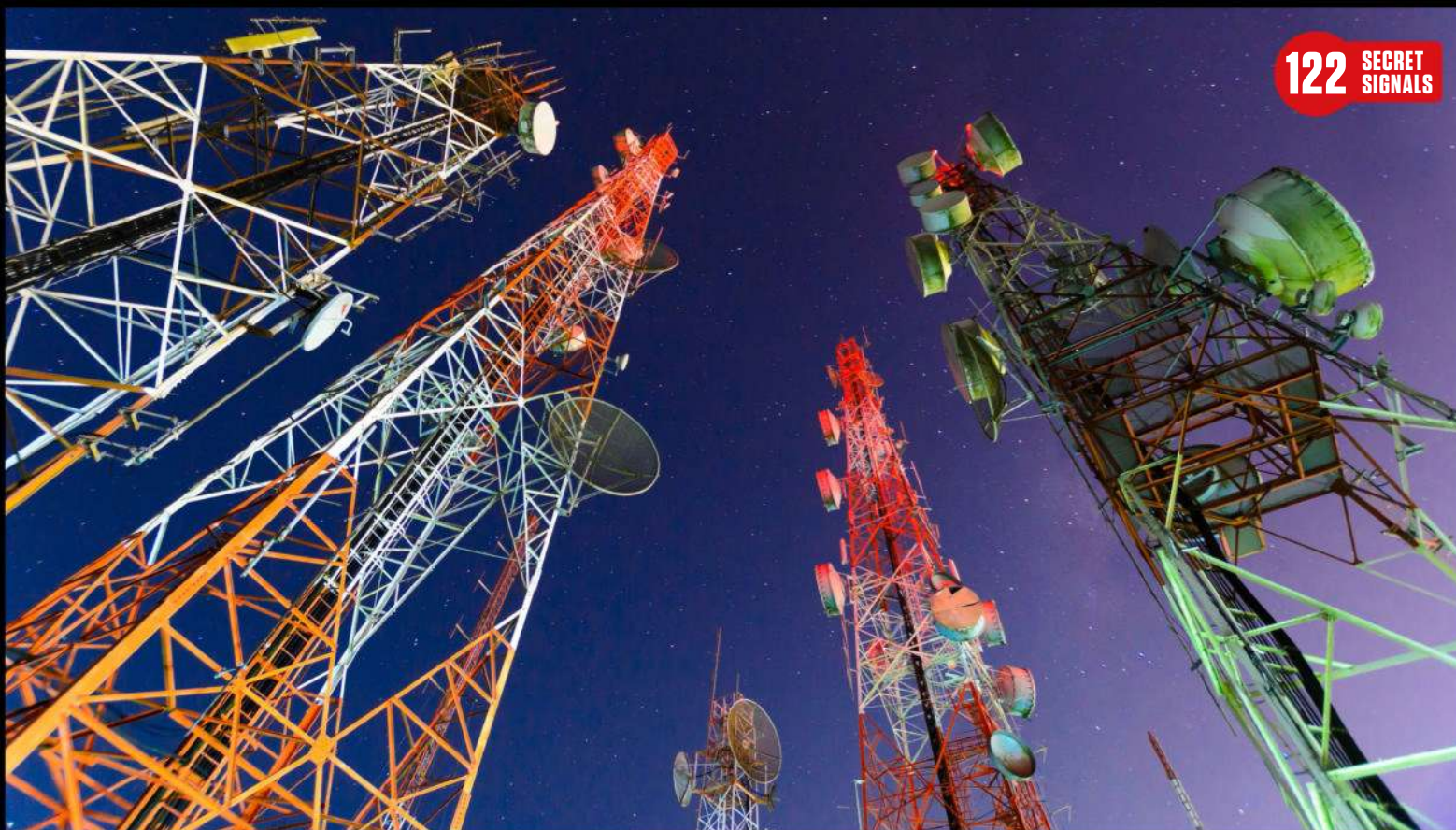
**106** SOMETHING'S AFOOT  
IN THE SALISH SEA

**"MANY OF THE SALISH SEA FEET  
HAVEN'T BEEN CONCLUSIVELY  
MATCHED TO ANYONE"**



Getty Images

**122** SECRET  
SIGNALS



Getty Images



# SOMETHING'S AFOOT IN THE SALISH SEA

Since 2007, 21 individual human feet have washed up along a stretch of the northwest US and Canadian coasts, prompting rumours of serial killers, the paranormal, and spooky coincidence

WRITTEN BY **BEN BIGGS**

**T**he first was discovered in summer 2007, in similar circumstances to the rest: a 12-year-old girl from nearby Washington State was visiting the marine provincial park of Jedediah Island, when she found a size 12 (US) right-footed Adidas Campus trainer. Inside the trainer was a sock bulked out with something, rather like the paper wadding inside a new shoe. She shook it out. Inside the sock was a human foot, thoroughly decomposed and long since disarticulated at the ankle. If this was a work of fiction then the girl would have gagged at the sickly odour and then clasped her hand over her mouth, dropping the shoe in a moment of traumatic realisation. But time and tide had stripped this appendage of most of its flesh and the last vestiges of its humanity. It won't have smelled any worse than a dead crab or small sea creature. It was black and shrivelled, scraps of what looked like shoe leather clung to it. It didn't look very much like anything you'd expect to see inside a sock, so her first reaction would as likely have been confusion as anything else. Discovering a single shoe on a beach is common enough, and no-one anticipates finding the former owner's foot inside. To the girl this shoe had a

sock containing what looked like an innocuous, wrinkly stump. Once she got past her cognitive dissonance she might have felt repulsed and unnerved, but it would have been hard for anyone even of a nervous disposition to muster up horror from a nub of bone poking out of sock, found on the beach on a glorious summer's day.

The next foot was found just five days after the first, another size 12 inside a white Reebok trainer. This time it was washed up on Gabriola Island, which is the other side of the strait. Like the first, it was completely decayed and otherwise unremarkable. News of this discovery failed to ripple beyond local waters, as did the next, and the next after that. Find number five garnered some international attention, but that was not the

end. Equally grim discoveries of feet followed and seemed to increase in frequency so that three years later, rumour and speculation was churning. People saw a pattern and started to fill in any blanks they saw with their own dubious theories.

Foot number ten was discovered on 5 December 2010, on a long, sandy flat in Tacoma, Washington State. It was inside a size 6 boys hiking boot that could have fitted a small adult. But the possibility that it could have come from a child was a more troubling prospect for the local community. Foot number 11 was the most gruesome in this series: the size 9 running shoe and foot was still attached to a limb right up to the knee. Nothing but a blackened tibia and fibula stuck out of a dirty grey sock in the mouth

**“INSIDE THE SOCK WAS A HUMAN FOOT, THOROUGHLY DECOMPOSED AND LONG SINCE DISARTICULATED AT THE ANKLE”**





## SOMETHING'S AFOOT IN THE SALISH SEA

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The shores of the Salish Sea aren't a classic seaside scene: wild weather can turn on hikers and explorers

Cathy Hughes



# FOOTLOOSE

How animals and the elements separate a foot from the body, bringing it to shore



## UNLUCKY FEW

Many of the feet are attributable to victims of suicide, drowning, or accident. Despite using DNA samples and other modern forensic techniques, there are few of these feet that can't be accounted for.



## BREAKING DOWN

The elements and animals in the sea make short work of the victim's body, which decomposes rapidly. Crabs and lobsters pick away at the softer parts of the cadaver, eventually pinching apart the sinew and dismembering limbs.



## WASHED UP

Feet don't usually float but some trainers do. Eventually the Salish Sea feet would have bobbed to the surface of the sea inside the trainer and found their way on a current to the shore.



of the shoe, but that was enough for it to be recognisable for what it was at first sight. Fished out of a marina in False Creek, Vancouver, it set the tongues of the city's maritime community wagging. This is when the stories and rumours of the Salish Sea feet began to pick up serious traction as news outlets across the ocean, respectable and otherwise, began to report on the apparently strange frequency with which the feet were being found. Strange to almost everyone except the scientists and investigators who know the area.

Dr Gail Anderson is a forensic entomologist and associate director at the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, in British Columbia. Her research includes studying the decomposition of pig carcasses, which are analogous to a human corpse, at various depths in one of the Salish Sea's many inlets. It gives her rare expert insight in the feet phenomenon. She's dismissive of the many chilling theories surrounding the fact the area seems to attract a disproportionate number of disarticulated feet to its shores, and gives a simple explanation for it: "Once the soft tissue is removed, then there is very little holding the foot on: think of an X-ray of an ankle. The running shoe holds all the small bones in the shoe and is a flotation device. Soft tissue is most likely eaten by arthropods - crabs, shrimp, amphipods, etc. The Salish Sea is in between the mainland and a very large island so this no doubt affects tidal patterns. Running shoes have lots of air in them and float. So once the foot

is disarticulated, then it can be carried by the tide. The rest of the body would also be disarticulated by animal scavenging or water action but would not refloat once skeletonised. Notice that no feet alone have been washed up - it is the running shoes that are being washed up - some just happen to have remains inside them. Running shoes wash up all the time. The first foot was found by a child in a running shoe on a beach in an area where there were several other running shoes as well - just no feet - that probably washed from a beach or fell off a boat."

You don't have to dig very deep to find mundane and conclusive reasons for the suspicious quantity of feet that have washed ashore in this area over the years. Police have linked many of the disembodied feet to suicides or "death by misadventure". Forensics have been able to match DNA profiles to other human remains that have a positive identification, or have narrowed the trainer brand and model down with such precision that it unerringly points to one particular missing person.

The public didn't let science and reason get in the way of a good story, however. Many of the Salish Sea feet haven't been conclusively matched to anyone, missing or otherwise. So enough doubt has been left in official police reports and expert opinion to give rise to theories of serial killers,

drug cartel executions and paranormal activity. Some official statements have appeared to support the more outlandish of these theories: after the first two finds in 2007, Corporal Garry Cox of the Oceanside Royal Canadian Mounted Police told the Vancouver Sun: "Two being found in such a

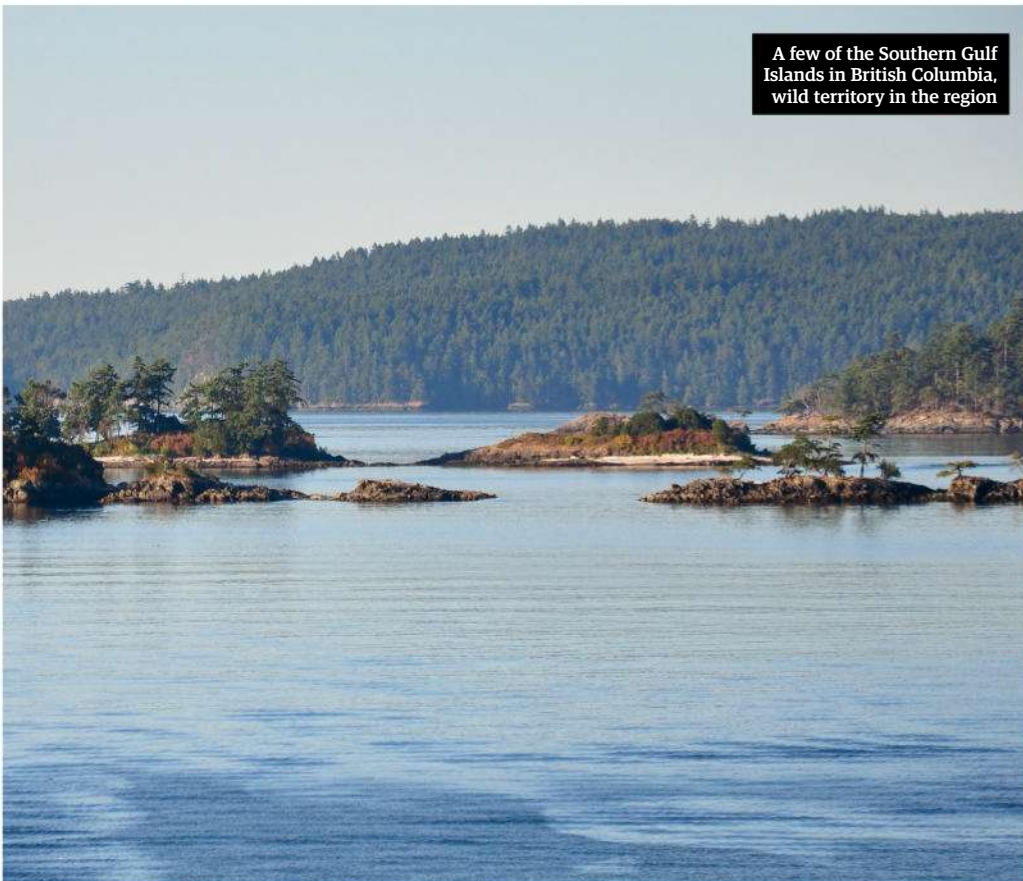


## PARANORMAL ACTIVITY

**Ghost stories surround the Salish Feet, whether they've been identified or not**

For those more inclined to flight of fancy, the Salish Sea feet and the places where they've been found come with their own crop of spooky rumours, from unexplained phenomena to full-on ghost stories. Reports of eerie mists rising off the beach at night and cold spots on the exact places where the feet were found have taken root in the public consciousness. This supposed paranormal activity has been conflated with native legends and more recent historical events, such as that of the SS Valencia, a steam ship that hit rocks three miles from Pachena Point at the mouth of the Juan de Fuca Strait, on 22 January 1906. It took two days for rough seas to rip the stricken ship apart, during which time dozens of passengers drowned. One survivor described a horrifying scene in which bare-footed women in night dresses clung to their children on the deck. A phantom ship has been seen by sailors in the area in the century since, and one of the missing life rafts was supposed to have been found drifting and unscathed, 26 years after the SS Valencia sunk, in 1933.

**"ENOUGH DOUBT EXISTS TO GIVE RISE TO THEORIES OF SERIAL KILLERS AND CARTEL EXECUTIONS"**





short period of time is quite suspicious. Finding one foot is like a million to one odds, but to find two is crazy."

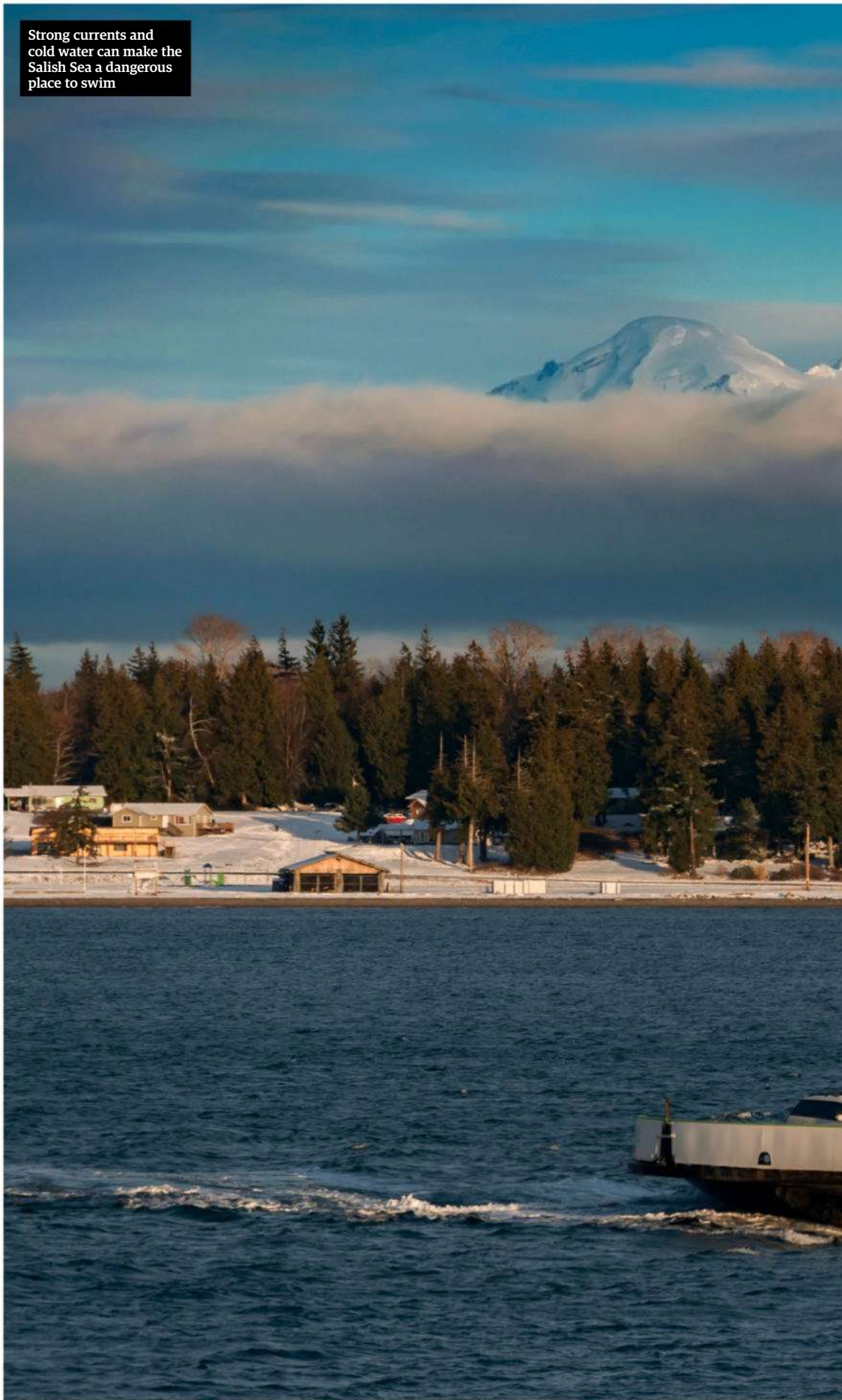
Of the 21 individual feet found on the shore or in the water in the last 14 years, less than half have been identified and none of these came from people who died in suspicious circumstances. That still leaves a dozen or so feet that can't be traced to an individual, which means murder can't be ruled out by the police in any of these cases. One of the more fanciful theories is of a Zodiac-style West Coast serial killer, who cuts the feet off their victims and drops them in the water, leaving them to be found on beaches as a sickening calling card.

The geography and history of the region around the Salish Sea also plays a role in the generation of the mythos. The indigenous Coast Salish population have inhabited the area for thousands of years, long before the Lewis and Clark Expedition found its way over the Rocky Mountains to this side of the continent. So the region is steeped in legends of monsters and the supernatural. Outside the populous port cities of Vancouver and Seattle, there are thousands of miles of temperate coastline that have their own rugged beauty - but they're no Californian beach dream. On a backdrop of breathtaking mountain ranges, the mainland shores and many islands can be treacherous to reach by foot, where crumbling cliffs and wicked rip tides can turn against an intrepid hiker in an instant. Temperature is mild in the summer, plunging to a little above freezing in the winter. This wild country lures you in with the promise of unparalleled natural beauty, but can easily take ill-prepared hikers and swimmers unawares. It's no wonder that people prefer to believe that something far more sinister than nature is at work here.

The fact that more feet have been found in the last decade than ever before can be explained in part by the widespread reporting of the phenomenon. In a vicious cycle, the more feet that are found, the more media attention it receives, and the more inclined some beachcombers will be to seek out old trainers washed ashore. Dr Anderson says that disarticulated feet in shoes can be found on shorelines around the world and that it's common in New Zealand, for example. "When it first hit headlines it was something like two or three feet that had washed up that were all male... everyone remembers those first media releases that made it all sound so spooky. People still say to me, 'but weren't they, like, all left feet?' No - but that is what sticks in people's minds."

Fuelled over the years by further finds and snowballing fringe theories, the Salish Sea feet story has taken on a familiar kind of cult status that could be compared to the UFO conspiracy theories around Area 51. Maybe the real mystery in the Salish Sea feet phenomenon isn't in the grisly secrets this feral stretch of the northeast Pacific occasionally deposits on its shores, but why it's subject to such mythologising.

Strong currents and cold water can make the Salish Sea a dangerous place to swim







Getty Images



# ARE WE REALLY ALONE?

Have governments across the globe covered up proof of alien life? From ancient carvings to abductions, the truth really could be out there...

WRITTEN BY **CHARLES GINGER**

**T**he meaning and mystery surrounding the existence of human life has occupied the greatest minds since the dawning of philosophy in Ancient Greece. Why are we here? What is the point of life? How did it even come to be? These fundamental questions are difficult enough to grapple with, but what about when they are applied beyond the boundaries of our planet? The answer is a field of endless exploration and countless possibilities centred around arguably the most important quandary of all: are we alone? Your own answer to this question may well be changed by what you are about to read.

## TAKE US TO YOUR LEADER

It is no secret that online conspiracy theories are flourishing like never before, and yet while many of them can be dismissed as ridiculous, the potential involvement of various governments in the cover-up of extraterrestrial encounters is not an argument easily waved away.

Those who argue that numerous governments are guilty of suppressing evidence of alien visitations include the former chairman of the NATO Military Committee and chief of Britain's Defence Staff Admiral Lord Hill-Norton, the

first director of the CIA, Vice Admiral Roscoe H Hillenkoetter, astronauts Edgar Mitchell and Gordon Cooper, and Paul Hellyer, the former Canadian defence minister. The claims of such prestigious figures that both the US and British authorities have actively sought to suppress extraterrestrial information begs the question of what exactly they are trying to hide.

At the height of the Cold War between 1947 and 1969 over 12,000 sightings of UFOs were reported to the United States Air Force. These included strange saucers and mysterious lights. Coupled with the reports of a civilian pilot by the name of Kenneth Arnold, who in 1947 claimed that he had seen nine bluish-white objects moving in a V formation at great speed over Mount Rainier in Washington, this led to the birth of Project Sign in 1948, an official government investigation into UFO sightings. While those tasked with carrying out the inquiry reasoned that most of the UFOs were probably Soviet aircraft, they had to concede that the exact origins of the ghostly silhouettes being spotted across America remained a mystery. Even so, this was apparently enough justification for General Hoyt Vandenberg, then chief of staff of the US Air Force, to order the closure of the project on the

grounds it had not produced sufficient proof of the existence of UFOs.

Project Sign was followed by two further investigations (Grudge and Blue Book, the latter being the longest-running official UFO inquiry), which were led by Captain Edward Ruppelt, who later wrote that Project Sign had produced an "estimate of the situation" that supported the idea of UFOs being responsible for the strange apparitions regularly seen soaring through the skies above America. Interestingly, evidence that supports Ruppelt's argument has never been forthcoming.

The American government is not the only one to have conducted its own alien investigation. In the 1950s Britain's Ministry of Defence undertook a UFO project of its own, a study commissioned by the Ministry of Defence's chief scientific adviser and radar scientist Sir Henry Tizard. He was insistent that sightings of UFOs should not be dismissed without proper scientific study. In time this gave birth to the aptly nicknamed Flying Saucer Working Party, a group of intelligence experts charged with delving into the truth behind bizarre phenomena in Britain. In June 1951 it published a report stating that every incident the group had examined could be explained by perfectly normal causes ranging from mistaking a bird for something else or a straight-up hoax.

## A HOME FROM HOME?

Despite the historic efforts of the US government to uncover the truth about alien life, and its

**"DURING THE COLD WAR OVER 12,000 SIGHTINGS OF UFOs WERE REPORTED TO THE US AIR FORCE"**



subsequent assurances that UFOs can be explained away, the presence of a certain air base in the middle of the Nevada Desert continues to undermine the official account: Area 51.

The name Area 51 is said to come from its map designation on a grid system once used by the now-defunct Atomic Energy Commission. Officially known as Homey Airport (or Groom Lake), this highly classified facility is situated on the Nevada Test and Training Range approximately 120 miles northwest of Las Vegas. Stretching over 38,400 acres, the land was withdrawn from public use in 1958 under Public Land Order 1662. It is also impossible to enter its airspace without permission from air traffic control. Heavily armed guards patrol its perimeter to discourage anyone from trying to gain access, and, if necessary, they are authorised to use lethal force. When a man attempted to breach the base's defences in January 2019 he was shot following his refusal to follow the instructions of Nevada National Security Site (NNSS) officers. Incidents such as this, coupled with the high level of security surrounding Area 51, has only served to feed numerous conspiracies as to what lies inside those razor-wire fences. Some believe the wreckage from the most notorious UFO event in history is still being stored within the base.

In July 1947 rumours of a UFO crashing in Roswell, New Mexico, began to circulate after strange debris was found scattered across a sandy

plain 30 miles north of the town. While the US Air Force was quick to dispel talk of an alien arrival by insisting the tangled metal came from a downed weather balloon, press interest in the recovered debris continued to fuel local interest. However, it wasn't until the late 1970s that a group of dedicated UFO researchers interviewed people connected to the crash. Their findings were out of this world.

According to hundreds of documents pertaining to the incident, a UFO did indeed smash into the Nevada sand on that fateful July day. The bodies of its deceased pilots were then whisked away along with the wreckage on the orders of the authorities, who then concocted a cover story so as to avoid mass panic.

Efforts to uncover the truth lasted into the 1990s, when the US military finally admitted that the 'weather balloon' had in fact been a nuclear test surveillance balloon deployed as part of Project Mogul, an operation that saw the US attempting to detect the telltale signals of a Soviet nuclear weapons test. Yet this belated official explanation did little to deter the conspiracists, many of whom remain convinced that the "most thoroughly debunked UFO claim" is in fact a government cover-up and that Area 51 is really used to make contact with aliens.

Interest in the mysterious goings on at Area 51 reached its zenith in September 2019 when plans to storm the base began to circulate online.



Pilots EJ Smith, Kenneth Arnold, and Ralph E Stevens look at a photo of a UFO



Despite the US military admitting that Area 51 is used for researching stealth aircraft, many conspiracists believe it is home to evidence of aliens



People gather at the 'Storm Area 51' event in Rachel, Nevada



US Air Force Officer Irving Newton inspects debris from the Roswell crash



The mystery of how aliens might look has continued to fascinate those who believe in them





The east gate of the former US Air Force base in Rendlesham Forest, dubbed as 'Britain's Roswell'

## BARNEY AND BETTY'S ALIEN ADVENTURE

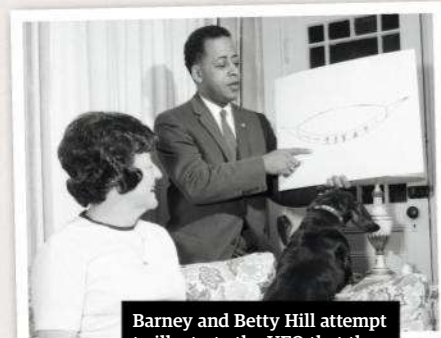
**The apparent abduction of a New Hampshire couple in 1966 is still the most famous case of an alien kidnapping**

In September 1961 Barney and Betty Hill of New Hampshire, US, decided to embark on a spontaneous three-day trip to Montreal and Niagara Falls for a delayed honeymoon. On the final night of their vacation, as they drove home in the dark, the couple noticed a strange light apparently following them through the White Mountains of their home state. Stopping the car, Barney reached for his gun and clambered to confront their skybound stalker. What the couple saw next would change their lives forever.

A wide, flat, metallic disc landed on the roof of the car and began to emit a beeping noise that immediately made the couple feel drowsy. They would wake up two hours later 35 miles down the road to find their watches had stopped working and their shoes and clothes were scuffed and torn in places. Neither of them could remember the previous few hours.

Later, while under hypnosis, the couple would recall being experimented on by grey beings with wide eyes while a "leader" watched on from the side of a rounded room bathed in bright light. Not only did they remove hair and nail clippings, but according to Betty the aliens spoke to their captives and showed them a star map, which Betty was able to draw.

While not the first claim of an alien abduction, the Hills' experience that night captured the public imagination and remains the most famous case to date.



Barney and Betty Hill attempt to illustrate the UFO that they claimed abducted them



Inspired by a Facebook event posted by 21-year-old California student Matty Roberts in July calling fellow UFO believers to "storm Area 51, they can't stop all of us", what was originally a joke gained immediate traction. Millions of online users vowed to help in raiding the base to reveal its secrets, and a date of 20 September was set for this daring undertaking. Such was the level of official concern that a spokesperson for the US military warned people against trying to enter the facility and a state of emergency was declared in two counties.

In the end a harmless festival dubbed Alienstock was held nearby, and only two Dutch YouTubers made it anywhere close to the base. Their reward was to be arrested, fined and returned to the Netherlands. Yet the fact that the government took the threat of a mass invasion of Area 51 so seriously does beg the question of what they are so desperate to keep secret. Could it really be proof of alien life?

### IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS

Roswell and the secrets of Area 51 may occupy most of the UFO landscape, but America is far from alone when it comes to potential sightings of alien life. When it comes to instances of the unexplained, what unfolded in late December 1980 within the shadows of Rendlesham Forest, Suffolk, takes some beating.

Known as 'Britain's Roswell', the event is still keenly debated by UFO enthusiasts and sceptics alike, and in the almost 40 years since the incident took place accounts and facts still remain unclear and often contradictory. So just what did happen within this otherwise peaceful wood?

At approximately 3am on the morning of 26 December military personnel patrolling the perimeter of RAF Woodbridge spotted strange lights above the forest. Initially believing an aircraft had crashed, they ventured into the trees to

investigate and, according to the claims of several witnesses, stumbled upon a glowing metallic object ringed with coloured lights.

One Ministry of Defence employee, Nick Pope, later co-authored a book about the sighting titled *Encounter in Rendlesham Forest: The Inside Story of the World's Best Documented UFO Incident*, in which he stated, "This was not some vague 'lights in the sky' sighting - the UFO actually landed."

Two days later a further investigation of the supposed landing site revealed unusual levels of radiation, and as Lieutenant Colonel Charles Halt and his staff searched for evidence they are said to have noticed three lights in the sky that, according to Halt, seemed to be hovering and ejecting streams of light.

These incredible sightings have since been explained by astronomers as the light emitted by especially bright stars, and a light spotted to the east is believed to have been caused by the nearby Orfordness Lighthouse. But Halt remains convinced he saw a UFO. Speaking in 2015, he claimed to have fresh evidence to support his argument.

"I have confirmation that [radar operators] saw the object go across their 60-mile scope in two or three seconds, [travelling at] thousands of miles an hour. He [the UFO] came back across their scope again, [and] stopped near the water tower. They watched it and observed it go into the forest where we were," said Halt. "At Wattisham [airfield] they picked up what they called a 'bogie' and lost it near Rendlesham Forest. Whatever was there was clearly under intelligent control."

### ANCIENT EVIDENCE?

The idea of UFO sightings is commonly imagined as a 20th-century phenomenon, but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that our ancient ancestors may well have had alien encounters of



## “THE MAYA PYRAMIDS FOUND IN THE ANCIENT CITY OF CHICHÉN ITZÁ IN MEXICO ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN BUILT WITH THE HELP OF ALIENS”

their own. Prehistoric drawings have been found on cave walls depicting non-human and non-animal creatures as well as many mysterious unexplained symbols. Scribbles unearthed in Charama, India, that are believed to be approximately 10,000 years old clearly depict alien-like beings not too dissimilar from those shown in Hollywood blockbusters.

More recent evidence of potential alien encounters can be found in Domenico Ghirlandaio's 15th-century masterpiece *The Madonna with Saint Giovannino*. While the Virgin Mary prays in the foreground, a man and his dog can clearly be seen behind her looking skyward at a hovering disc-like object.

There is even a sighting noted in the Bible in The Book of Ezekiel. It claims that the prophet had a vision of a spaceship used by an advanced race to travel to Earth.

UFO researchers have also pointed to architectural evidence of alien life. The Maya pyramids found in the ancient city of Chichén Itzá

in Mexico are believed to have been built with the help of aliens, who are said to have then used the pyramids as markers for landing their vessels. Some theorists even go so far as to claim that the pyramids emit powerful energy beams that would have enabled the ancient Maya to communicate with these extraterrestrials.

Further south, carved into the sands of the Nazca Desert, are a series of strange lines that some believe to be the work of UFOs. Many of them are shaped like animals or plants, while others are simply straight lines or more elaborate geometric shapes. Etched across 193 square miles, some of the lines stretch to 200 metres in length. Historians believe them to be the work of native people between 500 BCE and 500 CE, but others are certain the lines served an otherworldly purpose. According to Swiss author Erich von Däniken, the lines helped to delineate an extraterrestrial airfield used by aliens thousands of years ago.

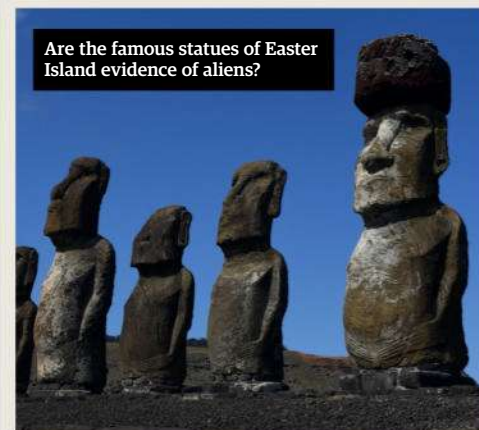
The Pyramids of Giza and the Moai statues of Easter Island are also regularly cited as ancient evidence of UFOs helping humans to shape incredible constructions that many believe would have been beyond the means of mankind at the time. With such a widespread array of weird and wonderful creations, it is easy to determine why many see the hand of intelligent alien life in what are most likely ingenious - but very human - projects.

### FRIEND OR FOE?

Regardless of whether or not you subscribe to the view that the



Wikipedia, Diego Delso / CC BY-SA



Getty Images



US Dept of Defense

## THE PENTAGON TAPES

In a rare move, the US government has released footage of 'unexplained aerial phenomena'

In April 2020 US authorities unexpectedly granted the release of three videos that appear to show UFOs moving at remarkable speed. Previously leaked in 2007 and 2017, the footage was taken in 2004 and 2015 during US Air Force training flights. The most convincing video was shot in 2004 and features two fighter pilots tracing a rotating saucer-like object as it accelerates over the Pacific Ocean. "Look at that thing, dude!" exclaims one of the pilots. "It's rotating!" Another video reveals a pilot's attempt to lock onto and trace a rapidly moving

UFO zipping above a body of water. Initially it evades the camera, such is its speed. A pilot can clearly be heard asking, "What the f\*\*\* is that?!" A second voice then says "Oh my gosh, what the hell is that man?!" The final clip shows a bright white light that seems to hover before darting out of view.

The Pentagon has explained that it released the footage in an effort to "clear up any misconceptions by the public on whether or not the footage that has been circulating was real".





aforementioned events and landmarks are the workings of aliens, what is beyond doubt is that flashing lights and ornate buildings are benign evidence of UFOs, if they are in fact evidence at all. But not all reports of intergalactic encounters are quite so convivial.

Sometimes labelled the 'abduction phenomenon', reports of aliens kidnapping unsuspecting humans have been made since the 1960s, when Barney and Betty Hill of New Hampshire, US, claimed to have been spirited away by UFOs (see boxout for more on their experience). Many of the people who have purported to have been snatched by aliens described being examined or experimented on. In October 1989, Steve and Dawn Hess travelled into the Mojave Desert for what they hoped would be a few peaceful days in their camper van. But their escape into the wild apparently turned into a nightmare when aliens descended on the couple and began to toy with their minds using telepathy. In later interviews Dawn explained that they were hypnotised, and while trapped in their trances they were told that a supreme galactic leader wanted to live in harmony with humans and

bring together five galaxies. In order to achieve this aliens were being sent to Earth to intervene and stop mankind from destroying it.

An arguably even more outlandish claim to abduction was made in 1994 by Meng Zhaoguo of China. While walking through Red Flag Forest in Heilongjiang, China's most northern province, Zhaoguo saw an unusual object drift down among the trees. Drawn to it out of curiosity, Zhaoguo soon regretted his decision to investigate, for the aliens were equally intrigued by him. According to Zhaoguo the aliens within the aircraft began to harass him, routinely dragging him back to their mothership to copulate with them and even whisking him off to Mars. Unsurprisingly, many in China were not entirely convinced by Zhaoguo's account, as is often the case with any reports of alien abduction, something that Harvard psychiatrist John Mack believes is unfair: "Every other culture in history except this one, in the human race, has believed there were other entities, other intelligences in the universe... Why do we treat people like they are crazy, humiliate them, if they're experiencing some other intelligence?"

But if aliens really are kidnapping humans, what could they hope to gain by doing so? Are they delivering a message to us? For decades it has been said that warnings have accompanied many abductions. Perhaps their intentions are far from peaceful.

Professor Stephen Hawking was very clear in his opinion on what the arrival of extraterrestrial life would mean for mankind. "If aliens ever visit us, I think the outcome would be much as when Christopher Columbus first landed in America, which didn't turn out very well for the Native Americans," he said in 2010. "A civilisation reading one of our messages could be billions of years ahead of us. If so, they will be vastly more powerful, and may not see us as any more valuable than we see bacteria."

According to esteemed physicist Brian Cox, it is "inconceivable that there will not be life and I think civilisations out there among the stars". If Professor Hawking was right, perhaps we should all be grateful that super-advanced alien overlords have to date refrained from making their presence known to all but a few humans. After all, whether they will come in peace is far from guaranteed.

Paul Trent, a farmer from McMinnville, Oregon, photographed this UFO flying over his land in 1950





# THE BIGGEST ART THEFT IN HISTORY


The story of this famous art heist would easily be at home in a Hollywood spy thriller

WRITTEN BY JACK GRIFFITHS


In the early hours of 18 March 1990, the Isabella Gardner Museum had closed down for the night. Unbeknownst by the rowdy St Patrick's Day parties nearby, a police car pulled into a side street alongside the museum. Two men dressed as Boston Police Department officers waited in the car for around an hour before the clock hit 1.00am. In the building itself, security guard Richard Abath was on the nightshift. He had just switched positions with a colleague and was now occupying the front desk. He had 24 minutes until a robbery would commence.

## GAINING ENTRY

At 1.24am, the sound of "Police! Let us in" rang through Abath's eardrums. The security guard hesitated but seeing police hats, coats and badges, he let the cops into the museum, going against protocol. The two men explained to Abath that they had a warrant for his arrest so the security



The choice of paintings stolen still puzzles investigators as more valuable artwork was not taken



The way in which the paintings were ripped from the frame has lead experts to believe it was an amateur heist





Also known as Fenway Court, the museum still boasts a significant international art collection



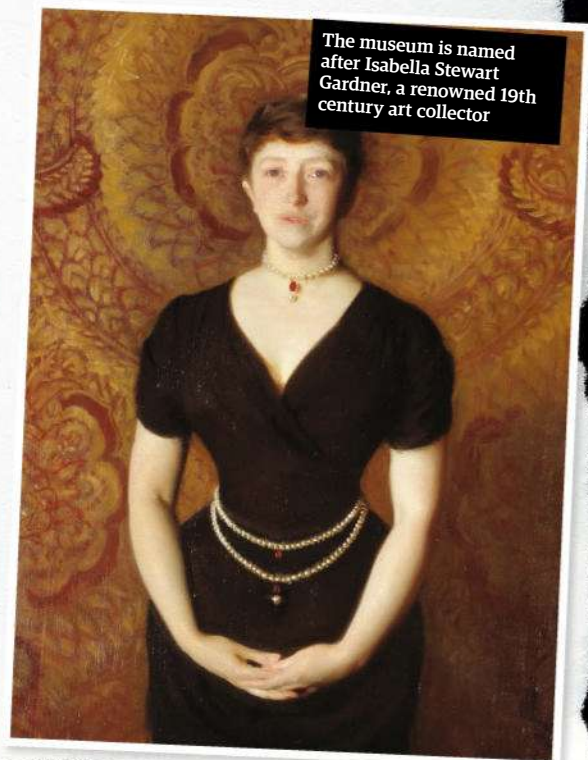
The artwork has been lost for such a long time that some think it might have been destroyed

guard timidly moved away from his desk. He had just made a fatal mistake: the two men were not from the Boston Police Department. Now out of hand's reach of the museum's panic button, he would have no answer to the bandits. Abath knew these two men were not all they seemed as soon as they ordered him to stand against the wall and handcuffed him. When Abath noticed they hadn't frisked him before putting his hands in cuffs and above all the fake moustache on one of the cops, he knew he was part of a robbery. As the thieves cuffed Abath's colleague, the cocky raiders explained, "You're not being arrested, this is a robbery. Don't give us any problems and you won't get hurt" as they were led to the basement and handcuffed to nearby pipes. Duct tape was put on their hands, feet and over their mouths and they were imprisoned 40 yards away from each other. There was now no escape for Abath.

The two robbers pressed on with their mission to plunder the museum for everything they could. The building housed an art collection of international importance with works worth hundreds of millions from the likes of Rembrandt and Vermeer. The only thing counting against them now were the building's

motion detectors, which would record their every move and be painful viewing later on. First, they entered the Dutch Room and the thieves managed to set off an alarm, which was instantly smashed and deactivated. The first artwork to be taken - and one of the most expensive - was Rembrandt's *Storm On The Sea Of Galilee*, which was hacked from its frame. More of the Dutch painter's almost priceless work was to follow. Moving from room to room, it wasn't to be the only painting that was taken. One of the Johannes Vermeer paintings taken was one of only 36 in existence and a rare Chinese bronze gu dating from the Shang Dynasty in 1200BCE was stuffed into a bag, as was an impressive-looking eagle finial from Napoleonic France.

Two trips were made to the getaway car during the 81-minute theft. On their way out, the two men remarked to the security guards, "You'll be hearing from us in a year". Bizarrely, this threat never materialised. As the robbers zoomed off, it wasn't the end of the ordeal for the security guards who remained in their makeshift prison until their discovery at 8.15am the next morning by the first staff on the morning shift.



The museum is named after Isabella Stewart Gardner, a renowned 19th century art collector



### THE MORNING AFTER

That day the museum staff, including director Anne Hawley, reconvened to discuss the events of the fateful night. After a thorough observation it was found that 13 pieces of artwork had been stolen, totalling an eye-watering \$500 million. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum had been the target for the largest private property theft in history. The subsequent inquiry was led by no less than the FBI. Believing that the booty could have crossed state or even international borders, British, French and Japanese authorities, amongst others, were put on alert as were museums and art dealers worldwide. The initial reward was \$1 million but after no luck, the sum was increased to \$5 million. Over the years, the authorities have made sketches of who they believe to be the culprits from Abath's observations, but finding out who was responsible has been a long and unfruitful process thus far. The primary theory behind the heist is that the two men were part of a larger criminal organisation based in the Mid-Atlantic region of the USA. The FBI also believe that the suspects are now long since dead and the artwork has been sold on, but still decline to reveal who they believe to be the culprits. Abath, who openly admitted to turning up to shifts under the influence of cannabis, was questioned over his role in the heist but after various investigations and two lie detector tests, he was declared innocent.

### \$500 MILLION LOST

Naturally, the museum was dedicated to finding the culprits but the biggest issue at hand was the condition of the stolen goods. If the artworks were housed in a place that had a humidity of over 50 per cent or a temperature of above 21°C (70°F), they would be ruined forever. In addition, if exposed to too much light or wrapped in acidic paper, they would deteriorate rapidly. With the two culprits now likely dead, the investigation has turned into a retrieval operation but there is still a strong desire to see who was responsible brought to justice.

Renowned Boston mobster Whitey Bulger was implicated but there was little evidence that he was connected. Second and third on the list were local criminals Myles Connor and Bobby Donati. After questioning, both admitted that they had eyed up the museum for a possible heist and Donati had been spotted with a sack of police uniforms in a local night club. Donati's murder in 1991 after a gang war all but ended this potential source. Connor resurfaced again in 1997, claiming he could locate the booty in exchange for legal immunity but his offer was flatly refused.

Four years later, Hawley received a letter promising to return the artwork for \$2.6 million but it turned out to be a dead end. The first major lead came in 2013 when authorities were convinced that the heist was the brains of a criminal organisation in New England and the art was now in either Connecticut or Philadelphia. They may have even been put up for sale in the former US capital. The same year it was also decreed that both robbers were now deceased.

### WILL THE ART EVER BE FOUND?

Security tapes are still being examined to this day and continue to puzzle the experts. There is no pattern to what was taken and many of the more expensive works were left untouched. These strange motives make it difficult to track down a particular organised crime gang. The fact that the paintings were crudely ripped off the walls is also another bone of contention - if they were looking for resale value, why would they be so careless?

In 2015 several new stones were unturned in this intriguing - and frustrating - case. After close scrutiny by police, it has been found that

**"IT WAS FOUND THAT 13 PIECES OF ARTWORK HAD BEEN STOLEN, TOTALLING AN EYE-WATRING \$500 MILLION"**



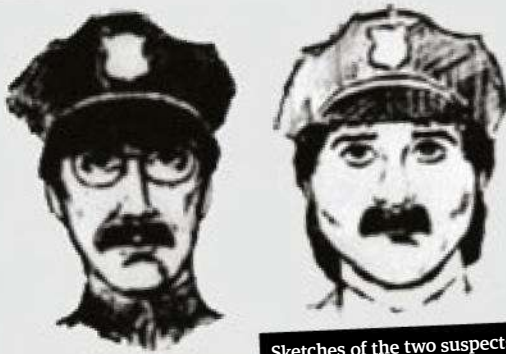
The museum remains open despite some empty frames



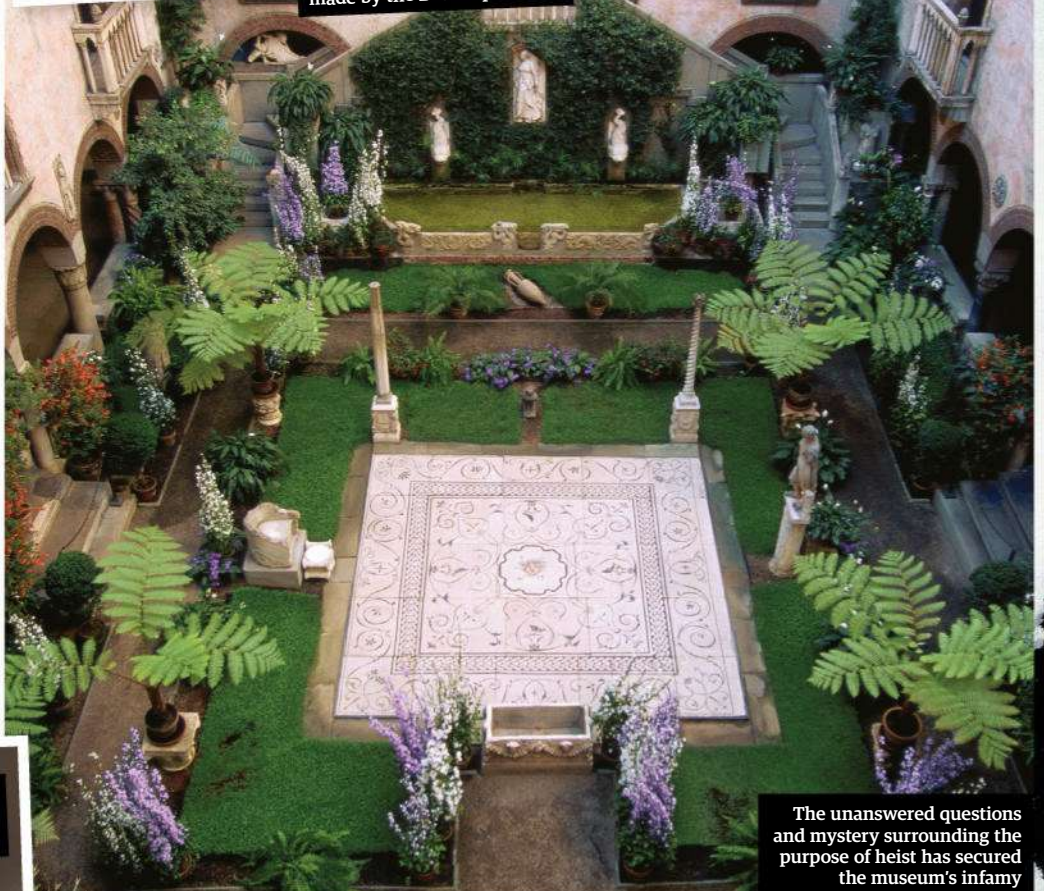
an unauthorised visitor entered the premises 24 hours before the theft, in a car that matches the description of the later raid. Was this person in league with the thieves? This incident from 12.49pm on 17 March, showed an unknown man being allowed into the building by a security guard, believed to be Abath, against museum policy.

The footage from 1990 is grainy and low resolution in quality, so it has been tough to identify who the man could possibly have been. This revelation was in August and four months later, 20 FBI agents tracked down what they thought was finally the end of their search. The agents made their way to Suffolk Downs horse racing track in East Boston after a tip-off. Both the stables and the grandstand were overturned at this secluded location that hadn't been open since the early 1990s. Two safes were drilled open but it turned out to be yet another dead end as not a trace of the artwork was found.

The web of criminal networking eventually brought a man called Robert Gentile to the case. An infamous Connecticut mobster, he failed a lie detector test when asked if he knew where the paintings were. The plot thickened when federal agents searched Gentile's house and found a handwritten list of the paintings and their worth. Gentile was subsequently imprisoned for other crimes but has never been officially linked to the Gardner Museum heist. Guilty by association just wasn't enough to go on and it is believed that the handwritten list was given to him to pass on and he knew nothing of the robbery. These revelations have brought the crime one step closer to being solved. The search continues.



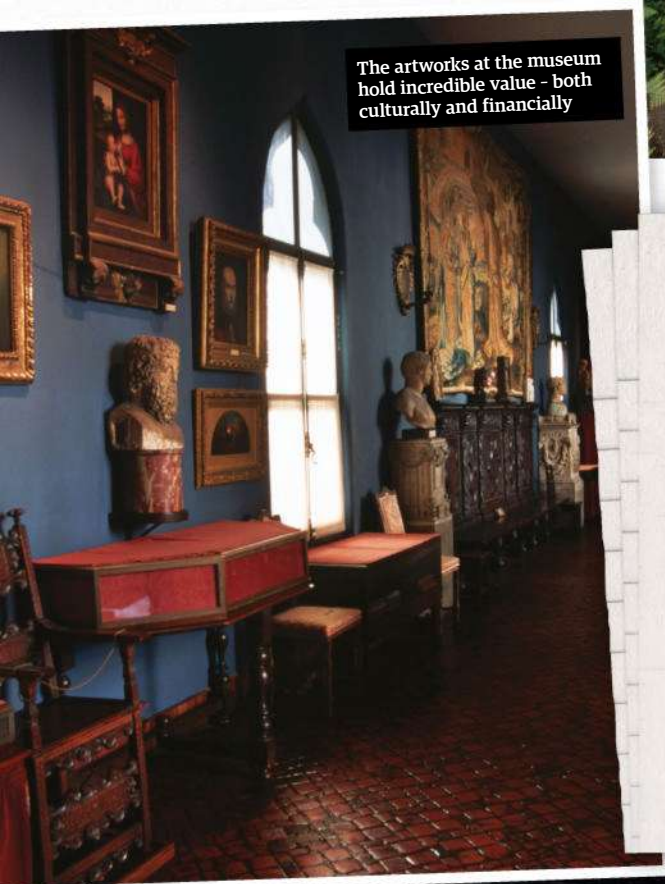
Sketches of the two suspects made by the Boston police



© Corbis

The artworks at the museum hold incredible value - both culturally and financially

The unanswered questions and mystery surrounding the purpose of heist has secured the museum's infamy



## THE HEIST IN POPULAR CULTURE

The museum is a popular landmark in Boston and is named after the popular art collector, Isabella Stewart Gardner. Known as 'Isabella of Boston', her status and the importance of the museum has left the heist with quite the legacy. Its high profile has meant that it has been retold and even parodied in various works including popular US TV shows such as *Drunk History*, *The Venture Bros*, *The Blacklist* and even *The Simpsons*. Perhaps the best reconstruction, though, has been the 2005 documentary, *Stolen*.

A feature-length film based on the heist, it tells the story of art detective Harold Smith who died the year the film was released. While battling skin cancer, Smith made it his mission to help locate the missing paintings. The film centres on the detective's quest as he travels from Boston

underground crime syndicates to Ireland to try and uncover the mystery, dealing with hoax calls to effective leads. Part of the film is also given to the story of Isabella Stewart Gardner, whose passion helped spread artistic culture from around the world in the late 19th century. This helps the viewer realise just how important the loss of the majority of the museum's collection has been to the world of art. The film's writer, Rebecca Dreyfus, was particularly moved by the incident and the film showcases her dedication to spread the knowledge on what has happened.

*Stolen* is dedicated to Smith, who cuts an interesting figure with his bowler hat, eye patch and prosthetic nose, worn as a result of his cancer. Will the artwork ever be found? Either way, expect more retellings of this fascinating heist.



СТРУКТУРА ДЛЯ УПОТРЕБЛЕНИЯ ЦИФРОВЫХ БЛОКНЕТОВ

Текст на страницах блокнотов  
из случайно подобранных пятизначных чисел, которые  
тесно связаны группами. Цифры этих чисел употребляются  
для зашифровки и расшифровки сообщений. Края блокнота  
обклеены бумагой со всех четырех сторон, чтобы непосвященные  
не могли разглядывать страницы блокнота без вашего  
разрешения. Каждый блокнот готовится в двух экземплярах.  
Ваш экземпляр будет подлинником, а второй экземпляр  
будет копией. Подлинник (зашиф) употребляется для зашифровки  
сообщений, а копия (расшиф) для расшифровки  
сообщений.

ПРОСТОЙ ЦИФРОВОЙ ТЕКСТ. Отысканный текст сообщения  
должен сначала быть переведен в цифровые заменители, и  
только после этого вы можете использовать ключевой текст  
блокнота для зашифровки вашего сообщения. Перевод  
производится посредством замены каждой буквы отысканного  
текста цифрой согласно нижеприведенной таблице № 1.  
Текст, состоящий из цифровых заменителей, называется  
"цифровым текстом". Например, слово "СЕНТИНЕР"

С Е Н Т И Н Е Р  
18 06 14 19 32 02 17

61740

CI 637

Reg. 2

10523

CI 626

Reg. 1

31898	16998	68888
27722	15838	83949
78451	52623	72587
69204	16489	91185
42424	97722	52611
69649	44576	3217
18194	81191	4267
73513	38649	3991
25988	86888	223
86147	86998	225
78418	79483	794
45753	42861	36
71433	81418	59
25591	75946	88
34557	43879	8
43916	65918	7
12175	17188	3
66817	88623	
18185	52346	
63914	57488	
12295	43867	
74565	51888	
61848	55661	
67583	46524	
63791	12479	
67586	67513	
56619	51784	
20872	16881	
44371	6113	
83571	7137	



# SECRET SIGNALS

Hidden inconspicuously amid the static are some mysterious transmissions – but what are they for? And who is behind them?

WRITTEN BY JACQUELINE SNOWDEN

**T**une a shortwave radio just right and you may be able to pick up some bizarre broadcasts. Strings of Morse code, sporadic snippets of music, a lone voice reading a series of random numbers... these curious communications may not make any sense to the casual listener, but they are quite possibly delivering important information to someone.

Many of these mysterious frequencies are known as numbers stations. While they never announce themselves, and no governments or intelligence agencies claim to run them, it is widely accepted that these stations are sending coded messages to spies. This is not as outlandish an explanation as it may seem. Shortwave radio may be comparatively low-tech in the internet age, but it's a reliable method of one-way communication over long distances. Digital activity can be monitored or traced relatively easily, but with numbers stations the intended recipient of a transmission is anonymous.

**“SOME BELIEVE THAT ORGANISED CRIME GANGS MAY USE THE SAME TECH”**

Operatives receiving these messages would likely decode them using one-time pads, code sheets that only the sender and receiver have. These lists of random digits work with a specific key to translate the number sequence into the intended message (for example, at a very basic level the key could be I=A). Once that message was transmitted or deciphered, both the sender

and receiver would destroy their key, leaving no trace of the means to decode the message. Every single message uses a new, randomly generated key – for all intents and purposes, the system is uncrackable. It's possible that these secret radio signals aren't exclusively used by intelligence agencies. Some believe that organised crime gangs may use the same technology to coordinate smuggling operations and other

illegal activities.

It makes for uneasy eavesdropping to know that you won't be the only person listening in on a numbers station. Here are just some of the spooky spy signals that have infiltrated the airwaves.





# THE BUZZER

Are the broadcasts of this secretive Russian station just a defunct Cold War relic, or are they something more sinister?

Somewhere in north-western Russia, transmitters have been broadcasting a series of repetitive beeps and buzzes almost continuously since at least the early 1980s. The regularity and reliability of the unexplained signal fascinated the small community of shortwave radio enthusiasts who stumbled across it. With the rise of the internet, access to the signal via online sources gained the transmission thousands more captivated fans. Despite growing interest in the signals, their origin and true purpose are still a mystery.

The station initially transmitted intermittent beeps and went by the call sign UVB-76. In 1992, the beeps inexplicably changed to buzzes, firing once every two to three seconds, all day and all night. Through the crackling airwaves, the buzzes sound almost like a ghostly foghorn.

Occasionally, the buzzing would be interrupted by a male voice reading out a random series of numbers, words spelled in the phonetic alphabet, and sometimes names as well. The Buzzer - as it unofficially became known - would sometimes change pitch and frequency, but was seemingly unaffected by whatever upheavals engulfed Russia. Through the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Soviet Union, the Chechen wars and all the political manoeuvring within the Russian Federation, UVB-76 kept buzzing along.

Then on 5 June 2010, without warning or explanation, The Buzzer stopped buzzing. For the first time in decades, the station fell silent for approximately 24 hours, but went back to buzzing business as usual the next day. For the next few months the otherwise monotonous, metronome-like transmissions were occasionally interrupted by Morse code, distorted voice recordings and two more brief signal blackouts.

On 23 August 2010, UVB-76 got even stranger. The buzzing stopped and a clear voice announced: "UVB-76, UVB-76 - 93 882 NAIMINA 74 14 35 74 - 9, 3, 8, 8, 2, Nikolai, Anna, Ivan, Michail, Ivan, Nikolai, Anna, 7, 4, 1, 4, 3, 5, 7, 4." Enthusiasts assumed these were coordinates, which translate to the middle of the Barents Sea (between Scandinavia, Svalbard and north-western Russia). And perhaps their decryptions were right - the Russian military perform missile tests in those remote waters.

The Buzzer resumed, but for the next couple of days those

Years active: 1970s/80s - present



Image Source - Getty Images

## THE CUBAN FIVE

**The not-so-secret station that supplied Communist spies with orders, and gave the FBI the means to catch them**

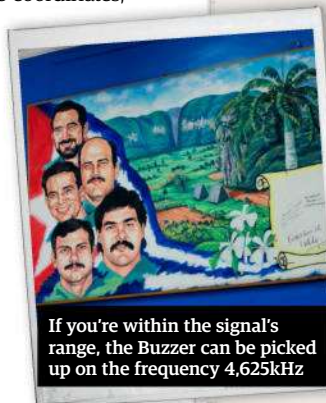
In September 1998, five members of Cuba's La Red Avispa (The Wasp Network) were arrested in Miami for conspiracy to commit espionage. During their time in the US, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Fernando González and René González, AKA the 'Cuban Five', had been receiving orders from Cuba on a numbers station known as Atención or The Spanish Lady.

The Cuban spy station would broadcast messages in Spanish, starting with a female voice announcing "¡Atención!" before reeling off number sets. The execution of its broadcasts gained a reputation among curious listeners for often being laughably bad: Atención's signal would wander; sometimes it would broadcast the audio of the station

Radio Havana Cuba by mistake; at least one message opened to the sound of a rooster crowing. For covert Cuban field agents trying to listen intently to the all-important announcements, understanding the messages was a challenge.

One thing that did make the job easier was technology. The spies entered the codes into a bespoke computer program that automatically decoded the messages for them. It was more convenient than manually deciphering the messages with a one-time pad, but it became a key factor in the Five's downfall.

Unbeknownst to the Cuban spies, in 1995 FBI agents had managed to secretly gain access to one of their computers and make a copy of the decoding program. Armed with this, the Americans had easy access to every message intended for the Wasp Network, including orders to befriend US soldiers at the nearby military base and to infiltrate certain groups of influential anti-communist and anti-Castro Cuban exiles living in Florida. The FBI's numbers station recordings were used as evidence during the trial of the Cuban Five, who were convicted in 2001. Atención continued to broadcast their signal even after the spies were arrested. Perhaps the Cuban Five had already been replaced by other operatives, or maybe it was another case of the station's poor production.



If you're within the signal's range, the Buzzer can be picked up on the frequency 4,625kHz

Image Source - Getty Images



Image Source - Getty Images

The similarities between The Buzzer, The Pip and The Squeaky Wheel have led to speculation as to whether they are all individual parts of a single system

## THE BUZZER'S SISTER STATIONS

**MDZhB isn't the only unsettling signal being broadcast from Russia**

Two other shortwave broadcasts have some striking similarities to the infamous Buzzer, known as The Pip and The Squeaky Wheel.

The Pip has been active since at least 1986 and broadcasts regular monotonous, electronic beeps all day, every day. It is occasionally interrupted by coded voice messages before the pips resume.

The Squeaky Wheel has been broadcasting since at least 2000 and its original interval sign was repeated 'squeaks' of two different tones. However, in 2008 it changed to two tones of electronic beeps, no longer sounding particularly like its namesake.

Both stations differ from The Buzzer in that they switch between two frequencies, one for daytime broadcasts and another for nighttime. Some avid listeners suggest that the three stations are linked somehow; perhaps part of the same system for domestic military communications. But only its operators and the signals' intended recipients know for sure.

tuning in overheard what sounded like someone shuffling around or knocking things. There was an open microphone in whatever room the signal was being broadcast from, and someone or something was definitely there. But, despite much anticipation among eavesdroppers, there was no 'man behind the curtain' reveal.

Over the following few weeks there were several more interruptions - this time, they were musical interludes. Listeners overheard short extracts of Tchaikovsky's 'Danse des Petits Cygnes' ('Dance of the Little Swans') from *Swan Lake* between the drones. Then, on 7 September 2010, a male voice broke The Buzzer's vocal silence once again. The mysterious announcer declared the signal's new call sign: "Mikhail Dmitri Zhenya Boris" or MDZhB. One of the most famous transmissions among Buzzer enthusiasts occurred several years later in 2013, when a male voice ominously stated "Ob'yavila komanda 135" ('Command 135 announced/initiated'). Rare interruptions such as these have raised more questions than answers, adding to the intrigue surrounding the station's raison d'être.

Radio enthusiasts and conspiracy theorists alike have spent many years pondering the purpose of these transmissions. Some think it's a long-forgotten Soviet-era military communication facility, still functioning but no longer in use. Others wonder if it could be part of an ominous 'dead hand' system - a relic of the Cold War designed to launch an automatic counter-attack should the US annihilate the Russian capital with a nuclear bomb.

**"INITIALLY, THE BUZZER SEEMED TO BE COMING FROM A NOW-ABANDONED MILITARY BASE NORTH-WEST OF MOSCOW"**

Despite much speculation, nobody knows the precise location of The Buzzer's current source

Image Source - Getty Images

A less dramatic hypothesis is that MDZhB is part of a scientific experiment to study parts of the Earth's atmosphere. A paper published in 2008 in the *Russian Journal of Earth Sciences* (entitled 'Information-measuring complex and database of mid-latitude Borok Geophysical Observatory') describes the use of 4,625kHz - the same frequency as The Buzzer - as a carrier wave to investigate the ionosphere with Doppler radio sounding. This requires a constant signal to be broadcast into the atmosphere at a specific known frequency. Perhaps this is all an elaborate cover story to conceal The Buzzer's true purpose, or perhaps those running the station are killing two birds with one stone; a scientific application is not necessarily mutually exclusive from another, more clandestine one.

The leading theory, however, is that The Buzzer is a numbers station that is only occasionally activated to transmit secure messages to the Russian military. In which case, the persistent buzzing between the mysterious coded messages is likely to be a way of keeping the frequency occupied so that it can't be used by used by other parties for different purposes. This remains speculation - the Russian government has never admitted to owning or running the station.

Besides the enigma of the signal's perpetual buzz and intermittent codes, the whereabouts of its transmitter has also sparked interest. Numbers station enthusiasts have tried to triangulate its exact position without success, but attempts to trace the signal's source have yielded estimates. Initially, The Buzzer seemed to be coming from a now-abandoned

military base in Povarovo, north-west of Moscow. However, after the strange messages in August 2010, the transmitter's apparent location changed, moving away from Moscow and north-west towards St Petersburg. It migrated to the city of Pskov near the Estonian border, suggesting that the strange broadcasts that summer may have been part of the source switchover. The Russian military underwent a structural reorganisation around the same time, with a new command centre being established at St Petersburg. This provided more evidence - if only circumstantial - for MDZhB having some form of military link.

In January 2016, the callsign changed to ZhUOZ, and in January 2019 it changed yet again. Now, various ones are used. The most commonly used sign is ANVF, although 2170, VZhCh, AIJZH and LNR4 have also been used, amongst others. ZhUOZ has not been abandoned, though.

The Buzzer has accumulated a cult-like following, with dedicated listeners tuning in to its almost hypnotic drones, recording its every announcement and debating what it could possibly mean. But each coded transmission or random interruption just raises more questions; the case of The Buzzer only gets curiouser and curiouser.



# THE LINCOLNSHIRE POACHER

How a jaunty English folk song became synonymous with British espionage

Years active: 1970s – 2008



One of the most famous numbers stations was the Lincolnshire Poacher. This strange station got its name from a traditional English folk song, the first few bars of which were used to bookend each broadcast. The melody was eerily played out several times as the signal's interval sign, produced by what sounds like a synthesised callopie instrument.

In every communication, once the tune ended, a recording of a woman with an upper-class British accent repeated a five-number sequence. It's thought that this code was to identify the intended recipient of the subsequent message, which would follow after three chimes. The main messages consisted of a long series of numbers (always 200 groups of five-digit figures), which took around 45 minutes to deliver in full.

These communications would take place every day between noon and 10pm (UTC). It's thought that the regularity of the broadcasts added an extra layer of secrecy. Transmitting on a regular schedule and sending messages of the same length each time meant that nothing was given away. If messages were typically five minutes long, but out of the blue an hour-long broadcast was made, it would indicate to anyone listening in that something was afoot. Consistency gave the impression that nothing was out of the ordinary, regardless of whether the coded content was telling operatives there was nothing to report, or perhaps to prepare for a vital mission.

With specialised radio direction finding equipment, avid Lincolnshire Poacher eavesdroppers hoping to find its transmission source claimed to have tracked it to the RAF Akrotiri base in Cyprus. It's believed to have been used by British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) to broadcast messages to agents based across the Middle East, but this theory has never been confirmed (nor denied) by the intelligence agency.

A very similar station known as Cherry Ripe was thought to have been broadcast from Guam, before being moved to Australia's Northern Territory. The only major difference was Cherry Ripe's interval sign – a synthesised version of the English folk song of the same name. Apart from that, its transmissions followed the same format, with announcements made by the same voice, so presumably it too was run by MI6.

The Lincolnshire Poacher stopped broadcasting in June 2008 and Cherry Ripe ceased transmissions about 18 months later.

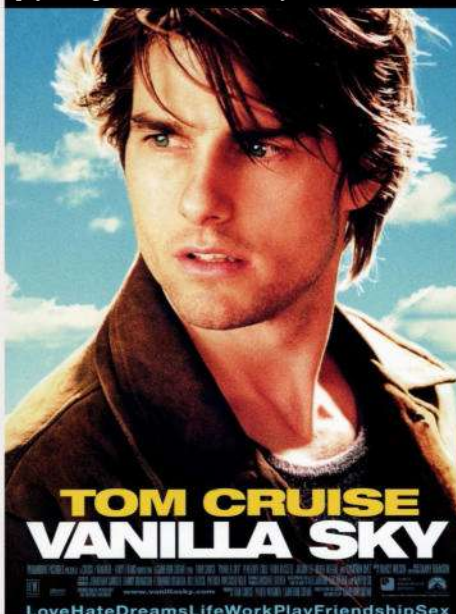
## THE CONET PROJECT

Discover the greatest hits collection of spy radio in an extensive archive of cloak-and-dagger broadcasts

In 1997, a four-CD compilation of the obscure recordings from numbers stations was released by the record label Irdial Discs. The 150 different station samples were put together by numbers station aficionado Akin Fernandez, who'd been captivated by the bizarre broadcasts since he discovered them while browsing the airwaves in 1992. The name, 'The Conet Project', came from the frequent use of the word 'conet' (Czech for 'end') in many of the broadcasts. It was rereleased as a five-disc edition in 2013 with one-time pad samples.

At the time, the CDs – and the accompanying booklet that speculated about each transmission's purpose – were a niche product among shortwave radio enthusiasts. With the internet age, however, it became easier for information about these broadcasts to be shared and their popularity grew to cult status. The increased interest in these mystery transmissions led to a UK Government spokesperson addressing the issue: "People shouldn't be mystified by them," she told the *Daily Telegraph* in 2008. "They're not, shall we say, for public consumption." It's the closest thing to an admission from an official source regarding a numbers station that there has ever been.

Audio extracts from The Conet Project have been used in popular culture, including the 2001 psychological thriller *Vanilla Sky*





# OTHER RADIO STATIONS

## SWEDISH RHAPSODY

Years active: 1950s - 1998  
Suspected source/origin: Poland

An ice cream truck melody and the disembodied voice of a little girl reciting coded messages in German made for one of the creepiest numbers stations on the airwaves. It used a tune from *Swedish Rhapsody No. 1* by Swedish composer Hugo Alfvén as an interval sign.



Image Source • Getty Images

## YOSEMITE SAM

Years active: 2004 - present  
Suspected source/origin: New Mexico, US

This baffling signal consists of a short 'buzz' of a compressed data burst lasting 0.8 seconds, followed by a clip of the cartoon character Yosemite Sam shouting "Varmint, I'mma gonna blow you to smithereens!" - a quote from an episode of *Bugs Bunny*, *Bunker Hill Bunny*, that was first broadcast in 1949.



Image Source • Alamy

## THE CUBAN BABBLER

Years active: Unknown - 2016  
Suspected source/origin: Cuba

This station earned its nickname from its bizarre delivery style. The announcers on The Cuban Babbler didn't read strings of code, they sang them - fast - to what seemed to be improvised melodies. Have pity on the intended recipient trying to copy the message down!



Image Source • Getty Images

## THE BORED MAN

Years active: Unknown - 1998  
Suspected source/origin: Cuba

The Bored Man sounded as disinterested in his role as announcer as his nickname suggests. He would often get things wrong and have to backtrack or restart transmissions to correct himself. Sometimes listeners overheard laughter in the background during his broadcasts.



Image Source • Getty Images

## MOSSAD

Years active: 1960s/70s - 2011  
Suspected source/origin: Israel

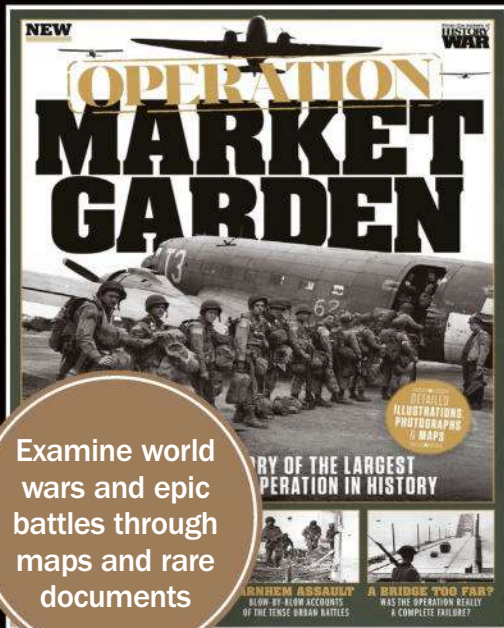
Unlike most other numbers stations, the signal nicknamed Mossad mostly used NATO phonetic letters rather than numbers. Samples from this station's messages were used by the American band Wilco on their record 'Yankee Hotel Foxtrot', and also inspired the album title.

**F**  
**FOXTROT**

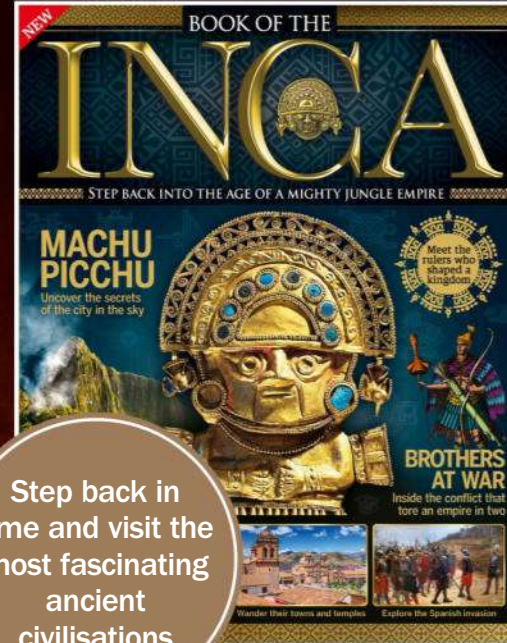
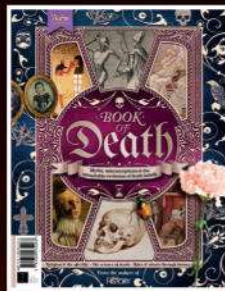
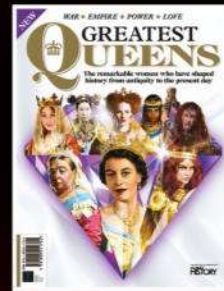
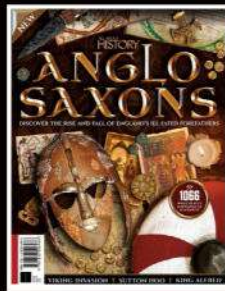
**H**  
**HOTEL**

**Y**  
**YANKEE**

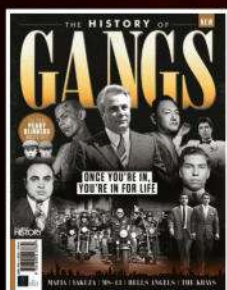
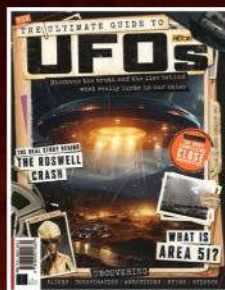
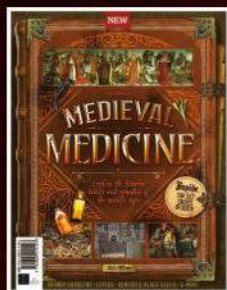
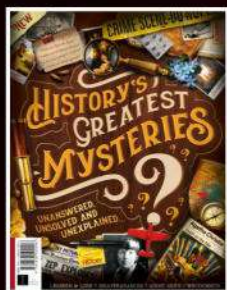




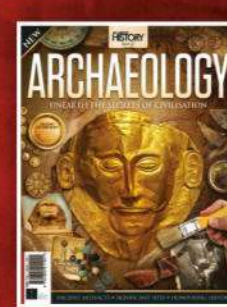
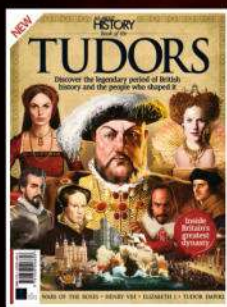
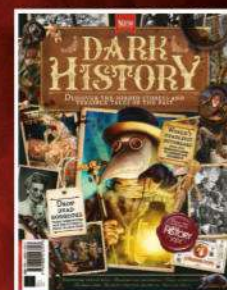
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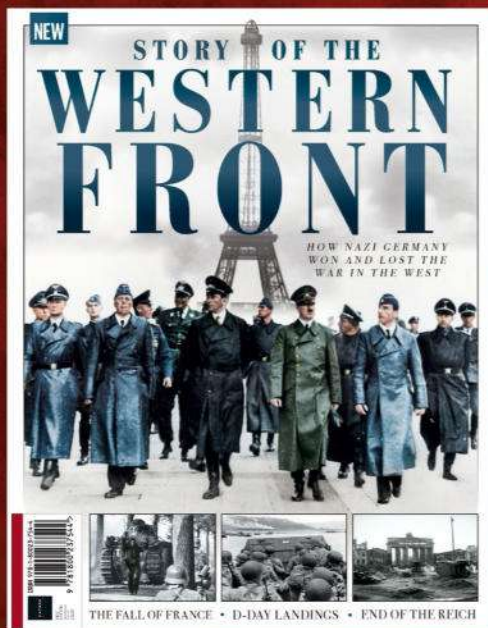
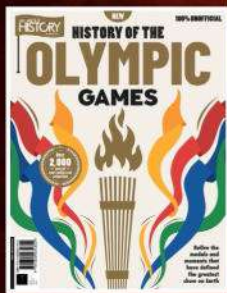


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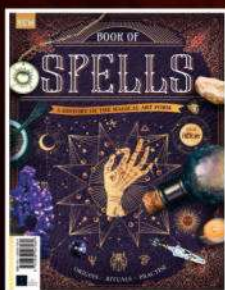
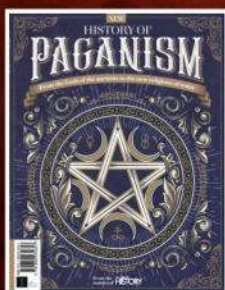
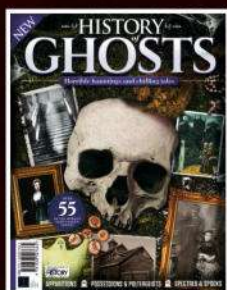
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13

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